



Libertarian socialism: a practical outline

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In this pamphlet first published in Switzerland in 1959, Gaston Leval depicts a transitional society—largely modeled on the Spanish collectives of 1936-39—characterized by: a confederal structure of vertically and horizontally integrated enterprise committees and industrial federations; economic planning; the use of “symbolic money” wages “to facilitate and regulate distribution”; the crucial importance of agriculture and thus the persistence of a certain amount of private property in the agricultural sector; the vital role of cooperatives; and the primacy of consumption over production.

PREFACE

Our attempt to sketch the outlines of a transformed society, for the purpose of establishing libertarian socialism, runs up against some realities and difficulties that we cannot ignore. The improvement of the military techniques of the states and the new conservative forces, no longer allows us to expect that the people themselves will be capable of victory, by force of arms, against tanks, jet bombers, modern artillery, H-bombs and guided missiles. In other times, despite an almost total parity in armament, no social revolution was ever able to win by force of arms; such an outcome is even less likely now.¹

Furthermore, the modern economy implies the interdependence of all nations. If a trade embargo were to be enforced against France, depriving that country of petroleum and its derivative products, as well as the fifteen million tons of coal annually purchased by France, and then of its Saharan gas supplies and the numerous raw materials imported from the four corners of the earth, this would lead to an unendurable economic situation, and all the more so as, for many proletarians, the revolution must entail an immediate improvement in their living conditions.

From numerous perspectives the problems we face therefore appear to be insoluble, since they are largely new problems or have acquired such dimensions that they can discourage us from addressing them. However, two historical reference points permit those of us who are trying to adapt to the new circumstances to entertain renewed hopes.

As we shall see, these reference points are only valid within the framework of our time and within that of the social and moral development that has been achieved by human societies.

The first reference point is the liberation of India. This liberation movement proved that it is possible to achieve in our time, and under favorable international political conditions, something that would have seemed absurd to even consider prior to the First World War: a population colonized by a powerful nation disposing of the means to impose its rule for a very long time, defeated the imperialism to which it was subject, without the use of armed force, violent struggle, or traditional combat. Gandhi’s tactics, which were the same as those of Tolstoy, who for his part appears to have been inspired by Proudhon, have demonstrated their practical value. If the moral power of the combatants, their tenacity, their identification with the public will, their civil courage, and even their heroism, are unhesitatingly mobilized, other no less significant victories are possible.

This is a great lesson that we must learn to profit from, by adapting this method to the specific conditions of the time and place in which the social struggles of the future will unfold.

We have therefore arrived at a stage of development of civilized humanity that, in the non-totalitarian countries, allows us to attempt to do things that have long been unthinkable.

One could imagine and elaborate, on the basis of active but nonviolent struggle, an entire battle strategy in which the truly syndicalist trade unions, the truly cooperative cooperatives, and the communities that boldly attempt to carry out integral projects can and must engage in the construction, both in the sphere of public spirit as well as that of the economy, the new world that has to be developed within the society of the present.

The second reference point is the occupation of the factories throughout a large part of France in June 1936. It is a fact of enormous importance that the workers were not evicted from the workplaces, by force, nor was any attempt made to evict them, as was also the case in Italy, during a similar experience that took place in 1920.

In both instances, there could have been many victims. In the most civilized countries the governments thought twice before repeating the massacres of 1848 or 1871, massacres that were publicized all over the world and are still linked with the names of the men and parties that ordered them. We shall not forget, however, that it was a Labour government that proclaimed India's freedom—Churchill would not have done so—and that it was Blum who, at the request of the pro-capitalist parties, negotiated with the strikers of 1936. This is the essential function of politics.

We must point out that in the two cases of occupations of the factories, the workers did not rise to the occasion of their historical role. They neither knew how to operate the factories nor how to assure production, at least to the extent that the existing stocks of raw materials, energy and available means of transport would have allowed. Unlike the workers of Barcelona, Catalonia and the Levant in Spain, the French and Italian workers were incapable of replacing the boss and management, proof that the general strike is no panacea, and that it leads nowhere if it is not just expropriatory, but also organizational.

In the latter case, of course, it would no longer be a strike and would instead become a revolution transforming the social structures. But in order for it to accomplish this, preparations must be made. The Spanish libertarians did not improvise. Their achievements were the culmination of a long psychological and practical process, one that was always focused on the final goal.

When a favorable opportunity arose, they took advantage of it.

REPLACING THE STATE

For many people the biggest problem of all is how to build Socialism with an organic national structure that would replace the state and the government. For them, these two different institutions—one is the crown of the other—only play a harmful and anti-social role. But they also perform a useful function, and not to acknowledge this is to display an unfortunate ignorance and an irrational or blind prejudice.

Those who think in this way are, to a certain extent, correct. The state and the government have committed incomparable evils in various human societies, by way of war, taxation, political oppression, support for the exploiters of the masses, a hypertrophied bureaucracy, tyranny of every kind and the apparatus of repression funded and maintained by the latter.

Often, however, they also performed or were the origin of useful activities: such was the case of Louis XIV and Napoleon, under whom the state nonetheless committed so many atrocities, with regard to the construction of highways, roads, and bridges, connecting regions and cities; the construction of canals and irrigation projects; the organization of public sanitation services, primary, secondary and higher education, which had arisen without their help, but which they reinforced; reforestation; aid to the poorest regions—all thanks to tax revenues. All of these things represent a positive role of the state, one that is relatively reduced under the impact of its negative role, since one year of war destroys more than was built in twenty years of peace, and the state's role in the economy is becoming so expensive that if all domestic activities were nationalized, bankruptcy would soon ensue.

And this is not taking into account, besides, the ruinous devaluations, or the fraudulent bankruptcies that have taken place throughout history. The example of the franc reduced to less than two centimes in value

after 1914, is proof enough. If France, after 1914—and the same thing happened in the other nations—was capable of overcoming its difficulties and amassing wealth once again, it was because of the labor of its peasants and agriculture as a whole, of the workers and industry as a whole, of the technicians and engineers, because of the labor of those who built factories, workshops and laboratories, toiling, often in obscurity, but effectively, and endlessly creating; and also because of those who organized the exchange and the circulation of commodities and monetary values.

In this country, after 1945, fifteen million producers—we shall exclude the five million parasites—have spearheaded economic progress, assuring the population's existence. Nor was the state idle in the meantime. It intervened, especially in order to extract, by means of an often crippling tax policy, thirty, forty or even fifty percent of the national income, and in exchange has given the nation no more than ten percent of the useful things it possesses.

The period of prodigious development of Europe and North America was that of the liberal economy. The “laissez faire, laissez passer” of the first school of economics formed in France—that of the Physiocrats—was directed at the state, which was encouraged to abolish customs barriers, restrictions, regulations and a large part of the tax burden that so inhibited the development of agriculture, industry and commerce. The state collaborated by abstaining from intervention. Today, the reconstruction of the German economy, which is undoubtedly the most spectacular phenomenon of the post-war era,² has been made possible thanks to the liberal economy, in which the state does not intervene.

And throughout the history of the European nations, and that of Republican Rome, ancient China, the Middle East, the Persian, Roman or Byzantine Empires, the periods of prosperity have corresponded with periods when the state refrained from intervening in the economy as much as possible, and those which collapsed fell as a consequence of the stagnation or the paralysis caused by the ruinous triumph of statism.

We shall not overlook all the other aspects of the liberal economy: the division of society into hostile social classes, the shameless exploitation of the disinherited by the privileged, terrible economic crises, wars. These same evils, however, have always been caused by the state as well, and at least the liberal economy has succeeded, as we pointed out, in developing the wealth of nations. The most important problem is that of an improved distribution of the goods produced; the social justice that statism can by no means assure. We shall merely recall at this point that, apart from the public services that have been, on a local scale, the work of the municipalities, the state has not been necessary in ninety percent of the creative activities of society.

Why, then, should everything go off the rails if it disappears? Why cannot the ten percent about which we spoke above be organized without the state?

We must therefore destroy this deeply rooted illusion that maintains that economic relations are, in their totality, organized, regulated, and coordinated by the government and the state and that the disappearance of the latter will lead to general paralysis or chaos in the production and distribution of consumption and production goods; in short, in everything that is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of life.

Whoever examines the functioning of the economy in capitalist society will observe that the major industrial sectors regulate their mutual relations in accordance with voluntarily established practice, and have often done so for centuries. A mine or a mining corporation provides, thanks to the capital that it has been able to generate, and thanks to the engineers and the miners, the iron ore to the steel companies that were formed a long time ago, without the state's interference, now or then in the past. These huge forges, these furnaces, these cable or rolled steel factories, ship sheet metal, tubes, ingots or bars of iron, all the prepared raw materials, to hundreds of enterprises, warehouses, and workshops that comprise their regular customer base. These factories and workshops manufacture or assemble machinery, utensils, equipment and other finished products that are distributed to multiple retailers in a certain territory. An enormous sector of activity has thus been constituted, together with many others, and like them it is a living, active whole in full expansion.

In all of this the state—as always—has only intervened in order to collect taxes.

The same picture can be replicated for all industrial activities. From the acquisition of the raw material to its preparation and transformation into articles of use, it is by means of the coordinated activity of men and groups of men that the production and distribution of the most important goods and services have been carried out unremittingly.

The same situation, even more characteristically, prevails in agriculture, which was born long before industry, and which has developed in accordance with its own efforts. It is true that now, in a country like France, the farmers request state assistance in the face of the need for the rapid progress that is required to keep pace with the rhythm of the modern economy. In countries like those of Northern Europe, however, and especially as a result of the activities of the cooperatives, the peasants, thanks to their concerted efforts, have achieved admirable progress. And experience proves that the state intervention that generally leads to protectionism is, in the final accounting, by no means a real factor that contributed to this progress. Is state intervention such a factor, for example, in the United States, where the stocks of accumulated wheat, thanks to government subsidies, are estimated to amount to hundreds of millions of bushels and represent a value of three billion dollars, from which no one benefits?

It is true that with regard to economic activities, the state has sometimes intervened to ensure the quality of commodities (this is what the corporations of the Middle Ages did, in another era). In a socialized society, however, fraud will no longer have any reason to exist, and specialized organizations will be responsible for assuring the quality of the products of labor.

Contrary, then, to what is generally believed, and for the purpose of preparing henceforth for the relations of the future, far from provoking economic collapse and chaos, libertarian socialization will lead to the establishment of a hitherto-unprecedented order. Even though liberal capitalism and the bourgeois economy have created the world as it is by themselves, with the results we have summarized, we are still far distant from the rational organization that **common sense** would assume is necessary to avoid waste and misuse of resources, to satisfy the needs of all.

We therefore foresee a Society in which all activities will be coordinated, a structure that has, at the same time, sufficient flexibility to permit the greatest possible autonomy for social life, or for the life of each enterprise, and enough cohesiveness to prevent all disorder. However, and we must insist on this point, this new creation will not be a substitute for the state, except insofar as it assumes responsibility for certain public services. For it was not the state that made possible the mining of sand, of rock, of limestone, that manufactured of plaster and cement, bricks, tiles, or that cut down trees and transported lumber, or the metal framing, glass, lead pipes, locks, or that framed, installed doors and windows to build houses.

In a well-organized society, all of these things must be systematically accomplished by means of parallel federations, vertically united at the highest levels, constituting one vast organism in which all economic functions will be performed in solidarity with all others and that will permanently preserve the necessary cohesion.

INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE³

The Trade Unions

What means are necessary to achieve this transformation, assuming that the requisite maturity has been attained by a sufficient number of workers?

The trade unions and enterprise committees spontaneously arise in industry and transport. We cannot foresee the relative importance of these two institutions. Ideally, it is the trade unions that should direct activities, since only they can embrace and coordinate all the enterprises—small, medium and large—that exist in every industry, in every locality—to the extent that we have not gone beyond the local framework.

This coordination is absolutely necessary. It has often been the case that, without being conscious of the fact that they are doing so, the enterprise committees tend to exclusively, or almost exclusively, restrict their attention to the activity and interest of each factory or each workshop.

Thus, let us assume that in the Paris region there are two thousand factories, small and large, that produce chemicals. Some have reserves of raw materials, others do not, and if equality is not established among them within a short period of time, the egoism of each enterprise will emerge and inter-enterprise rivalries will follow as the result of the interruption of transport or shortages of supplies. The trade unions situated above this enterprise patriotism, meanwhile, can equitably distribute the elements of production and direct the latter in accordance with a general plan that is imposed in accordance with the economic needs of the whole. For we must not forget that the social transformation must revolutionize the economic organization not only by eliminating capitalism, the boss, and the exploiter, but also by organizing production in accordance with the interests of the entire society. And in this respect not only are we situated, not only must we be situated, above the particular interests of the enterprise, but also above those of the corporation, or the interests of each trade, or of each industry. Otherwise, new forms of injustice and exploitation would arise.

In order to perform this role the trade unions must from now on attempt to do what has never been done before in the history of the world: each trade union must proceed to carry out a census of the workshops, the factories, and the industrial complexes corresponding to their particular activities. Each trade union must have precise knowledge of the number of workers in all the enterprises, their specialties and, if this is possible, the volume of production, the number of machines, the technical development attained, the energy consumed, and the percentage of the management personnel and technicians amenable to cooperation with the manual workers.

If, instead of contenting themselves with strike movements that are only imitations of real action, the workers organizations had assumed this task, after a certain period of time, they would have trained their militants at every level for the task of achieving everything that they claim to stand for, and the reformist and communist deviations would not have attained their current catastrophic degree of development.

Management Committees

Naturally, all of these things can only be possible if the trade unions are revolutionary, since, taken as a whole, they have ceased to be and we must even fear that their bureaucrats, their leaders—generally bourgeoisified and turned into officials—their secretaries, and their orators, would be incapable of playing the role, should the factories ever be occupied again, that was played by Jouhaux, Dumoulin and others, in 1936, or by Arragona, in Italy, in 1920. Perhaps it will be possible to take over the local trade union centers, and seize the documentation, which would be at least in part useful, from the strictly trade union point of view, and that might yield fragmentary information about the situation of each trade and each industry. Given the current state of the trade union movement, however, it is much more likely that revolutionary action will have to be carried out in the workshops, factories and enterprises of every type.⁴

In this domain everything remains to be imagined, intellectually elaborated and practically implemented. Anyone who is familiar with the history of the factory committees in Italy in 1920, where the movement was even larger than the corresponding movement that took place in France sixteen years later, is aware of the fact that these committees displayed an almost total inability to carry out practical actions. Once the factory was occupied, no one knew what to do next.

The Hungarian revolution took an “almost” identical turn. Because there are no real trade unions (the institutions that were and still are called “trade unions” are nothing but pseudo-working class organizations that serve as seedbeds for the proliferation of a bureaucracy that is the compliant tool of the Communist Party and the State), enterprise committees were formed everywhere. But they lacked a precise conception of their goals and their methods, and of the complete uprooting of the old system that was required. It would have been necessary to hold, within ten days, in Budapest, a national Congress of enterprise committees, that would have assumed the role of a coordinating institution for the national industrial economy, and to create the technical bodies necessary for the management of the economy as a whole. This would have filled the vacuum left by the disappearance of the state which, for good or for ill, organized the economy; this would have also helped prevent the appearance of a multitude of parties that sowed disorder, and would have rallied a good number of doubters to the side of the revolution.

What we have just written is, to a large extent, an outline of the road that lies ahead of us. We do not know if it would be necessary to act with the same haste in establishing a new institution that would replace the government and the state, or if both would survive thanks to the support of overwhelming armed force, in the absence of which their abolition would be possible.

The conditions of the struggle cannot be foreseen, and to provide solutions in advance, even assuming the best-case scenario, would be equivalent to writing a futuristic novel. There can be no doubt, however, that it is not idle to recall what Proudhon advocated on May 4, 1848, during the revolutionary period during which—once again—the unprepared population did not know what to do.

“A provisional Committee should be established for the organization of exchange, credit and the circulation of goods among the workers.”

“This Committee should establish relations with similar Committees formed in the main cities.”

“By decision of these Committees, a representative body of the workers should be formed, *imperium in imperio*, to oppose the representative body of the bourgeoisie.”

“The seed of the new society must germinate in the soil of the traditional society.”

“The Charter of Labor should be immediately drafted, and the principle articles of this Charter should be defined within the shortest possible time.”

“The foundations of the republican government should be established and special powers granted, to this effect, to the representatives of the workers.”

By “republican government”, Proudhon meant something very different from the way we would understand that term today. During his time the republic represented for the revolutionaries an ideal that was more social than political. Furthermore, there were two opposed forces: on the one side, the official provisional government, and on the other, the assembly of Luxemburg where the various socialist tendencies were represented, with Louis Blanc, Pecqueur, Pierre Leroux, Vidal, etc.

The republican government could have left this assembly. That is why Proudhon engaged in a fervent polemical exchange with those who held seats in the government, because, as opposed to the statist conception of socialism that they advocated, he advocated an anti-statist federalist conception. So whenever he speaks of the “republican government”, we must understand this to mean a formation that assumes the official representation of France and organizes its affairs according to the directives issued by the assembly of committees constituted “in the principle cities”, and implements these directives or helps implement them by way of that autonomous *imperium in imperio* organized by the workers that will never depart from the exercise of its social power, its organizational initiatives and its original dynamism.

The existence of a working class power, organically constituted as an independent world, that would impose its existence as a new reality of history upon a government that emerges from a revolutionary situation, taking the reins of the economy or as much of the economy as possible, and would as a consequence of its power compel the state to acknowledge its existence and respect it, is a perfectly plausible hypothesis.

It is possible that this process could lead to another stage during which there will be advances and retreats. Everything depends on the respective forces of the two adversaries. And, as we pointed out above, there will have to be a favorable political situation, since such an enterprise would be doomed to failure if reactionary parties, supported by well-organized forces of repression, were to be in power. It is also necessary for the international political and economic situation not to present an obstacle. A serious revolutionary movement must have specialists devoted to the study of these problems.

Let us therefore assume that, as a result of a wave of expropriations, the workers of industry and the public services in France seize a multitude of existing enterprises, and that they are unable, for the foreseeable future, to rely on the trade unions, which will only attempt to restrain the movement.

What would be their first task?

First of all, to elect enterprise management committees in every city that will, with the necessary authority, assume responsibility for the preservation of the equipment and machinery and the continuity of the labor process. These committees will assume an infinite variety of forms, depending on the size and structural characteristics of each enterprise. The enterprise committee in a workshop that employs fifteen workers will not be comparable to that of an enterprise like Renault, which in 1959 employed sixty-two thousand workers. In an enterprise like Renault, each Section will have to elect a delegate who is chosen on the basis of his competence and his sense of responsibility. These Section delegates, or delegates from specialized workshops, will in turn constitute a General Management Committee that will also be joined by the high level technicians who are reliable.

In smaller enterprises the principle of the enterprise committees will be the same. We mentioned the Sections or workshops of Renault because they concentrate different specialized labor processes. There are also such specialized labor processes—forge workers, rolling mill workers, boiler workers, lathe operators, pipefitters, etc.—in a medium-sized metal factory.

All these special labor processes together participate in the manufacture of machines, instruments, and products. All of them must be represented so that no aspect of the production process is overlooked, and in order to assure that the institution of which they are parts coordinates the labor process and ensures the necessary quality and quantity of production.

As for enterprise committees as they currently exist, they can be quite justifiably criticized to some extent because they often, although unconsciously, enmesh the workers delegates in the game of the employers interests, at the same time that they perform a major service by accustoming the workers to the management of the enterprise and the responsibilities of labor. Under such circumstances, it is possible—experience shows us that this happens in only a minority of cases—for some delegates to forget about the interests of their comrades. The majority do not forget them, and in a revolution something will happen that often takes place with numerous state employees and officials, and sometimes military officers or men who belong to non-revolutionary categories: the momentum of the events drags them along, and turns them into valuable auxiliaries.

Industrial Federations

It is indispensable, however, for the seizure of the capitalist enterprises, the means of transportation and the public services, to immediately acquire the requisite organic and institutional character for ensuring the collective life of society.

In order to achieve this goal it will be necessary, as soon as possible, to coordinate these committees.

How to proceed? We can imagine two ways: one, technical; the other, political-technical. Allow me to explain.

Technical: i.e., by industry. Each industry must, from the very first moment, organically constitute itself as a coordinated whole. The means to obtain this result will consist in electing delegates representing the various enterprises, who will be convened, first of all, in the local assemblies of industry. Let us assume that the following procedure is established for such representation: one delegate for each enterprise employing between five and twenty workers; two delegates for each enterprise employing between twenty and one hundred workers; three delegates for each enterprise with between 100 and 200 employees; and one delegate for every one hundred additional employees. Different percentages could be established for major factories like Renault, Citroën, Peugeot, Berliet, etc.

An arrangement could also be made to group together all the small enterprises to prevent them, because such enterprises are so numerous, from dominating, with the mass of their delegates, the directive organs of industry, when they only represent a minor part of production. These questions will have to be resolved in the future. We are interested above all in suggesting some broad outlines for possible courses of action.

The delegates will convene by industry, in local general assemblies, at which the directives of the labor process will be determined and a Management Commission will be elected, in which the committed militants must be represented in at least equal proportions to the technicians, in order to guarantee the social character of the revolutionary management, unless the technicians are also revolutionaries.

From this point on, the coordinating body will be formed on the living basis of the enterprise committees and, by way of their mediation, of the enterprises themselves. As soon as possible, the factories and workshops must be assigned with the necessary instructions concerning the volume and type of production that each one must guarantee or continue to guarantee. The directives will have to come from the general coordinating body.

This body will create as many commissions as are rendered necessary by the number of major projects that it plans to implement. It will be necessary to obtain, as soon as possible, that which the trade union did not acquire, which we enumerated above: statistics concerning the average volume of production of each enterprise, the size of the labor force, the total number and characteristics of the technical personnel, reserves of raw materials, the usual markets for the enterprises' manufactured products (consuming regions, exports, local consumption).

All of this information, collected and duly organized, as an instrument of labor, will allow for the accurate management of production, taking into account new needs and the collective interest. For example, in the printing industry, it will no longer be necessary to publish all the newspapers that currently circulate and which respond to the interests of political parties and capitalist enterprises. It would be better to provide for the needs of the workers displaced from these jobs at these newspapers rather than to waste energy and raw materials that are often so hard to obtain.

The organization of production must acquire a national scope as soon as possible. Each industry must organize on the basis of the entire national territory, because, over the passage of time, the distribution of labor has often adjusted, although slowly, to the needs of consumption as well as geological, geographical, demographic and other imperatives, which cannot be ignored. The role played by the transport network in facilitating long-distance distribution has favored this process of adaptation.⁵

It would therefore seem to be logical for each Local Committee of the Federation of Enterprises to elect, in proportion to the number of workers it represents, a small delegation (let us assume, one delegate for every one thousand workers, three for every ten thousand, etc.). All the delegates thus chosen will meet at a National Congress of Metal Workers that will be held in the geographic center of the industry (Paris, Lille, Nancy, etc.).

At this Congress, where more serious business will be conducted than the mere chatter of parliamentarians, the technicians will outline a general plan of labor in accordance with the usual needs that must be satisfied, on the one hand, and, on the other, the technical means, the labor force, the locations of extraction, the raw materials and the energy sources available.

Let us suppose that, broadly speaking—the statistics that will have been compiled will help, at first, to make more precise forecasts—that, in the Paris region, forty thousand farm tractors are produced each year, thirty thousand in the North, twenty-five thousand in the East, the same number in the cities of the Center and five thousand more in the cities of the Southwest.

Let us furthermore assume that this data includes the production figures from three hundred cities and metal working factories. We can foresee meetings in which the delegates of all these production units convene to establish the means to coordinate and synchronize their efforts. These meetings will be able to address, in addition, all the agricultural aspects involving their final product.

We may also consider the problem from another angle: First, regional congresses where all the problems concerning the manufacture of these machines will be examined. The regional congresses will then elect qualified and reliable technicians to serve as delegates to the National Congress, which will thus be streamlined as a result of hosting fewer participants.

These delegates will decide upon the modifications that should be incorporated into the allocation and process of labor, economizing in the use of labor and rationalizing the employment of raw materials and energy.

Today in France approximately thirty different brands of tractors are manufactured, because, in the capitalist regime, it is enough for a man to possess the financial means to build, and hire the technical and manual workers to operate, an enterprise that launches any kind of article onto the market whose sale will bring profits, if, as is generally the case, the initiative is commercially viable. Each enterprise offers its products that possess—or do not possess—their own special characteristics, depending on the degree of inventiveness of their designers or technicians. But we can eliminate three-quarters of the existing brands of tractors and only produce a limited number of models, responding to the terrain for which they are intended, cultural standards, etc.

Instead, then, of manufacturing machines that are too fragile or hard to maintain, the manufacturers will eliminate everything pertaining to the product that was merely commercial advertising, all that serves only to deceive and exploit the peasants, and improve the selected models as much as possible, and all the workshops will specialize in the manufacture, geographically distributed, of the types of tractors that are appropriate for the requirements of each region's agriculture.

The same approach is valid for all industries. Some, such as the chemical industry, will require extremely precise coordination. From sulfuric acid and coal to petrochemicals, and from petroleum to plastics, its products are of such variety, and play such an important role in the entire industrial and agricultural economy, that a meticulous and comprehensive organization must be created as soon as possible.

The production of textiles, the manufacture of cement, of electrical equipment, furniture, etc., must all be organized or reorganized from the bottom up, from the management or enterprise committees to the national industrial federations. The construction industry alone will require a national plan for urban renewal, addressing the needs of the population, and intensifying work where it is most necessary by way of the rapid distribution of labor power and raw materials.

Organization of Industry on a National Scale

This leads us to extend the range of our constructive and organizational considerations. Anyone who has even the slightest acquaintance with the economic activities of a modern society, knows that none of them are independent, just as no particular locality can survive on its own resources, and one would only display the crassest ignorance by conceiving a new society organized on the basis of the self-sufficient "free commune", as has been suggested by certain people who view the problem in a simplistic way, in accordance with the degree of their intelligence or how well-informed they are.

All industries rely on other industries. There would be no pipefitters without the miners who extract the iron ore, without the foundry workers to manufacture the different kinds of iron and steel, or without the indispensable casting, without the rolling mill workers, without the forge workers, etc. But these activities that are carried out as steps in a process would be impossible without other activities that make them possible. The miner works with machines (drills, jackhammers, pneumatic jacks, conveyor belts) which are supplied by metal working enterprises; these enterprises, in turn, function thanks to the energy provided by the electric power plants. These electric power plants produce electric current because other miners extracted from the bowels of the earth the coal that is transformed into electricity, or because dams are built, sometimes far away, on rivers and in the mountains, by construction workers, with cement, iron, wood, and diverse construction materials, which all come from different parts of the country, or even from other nations.

The same is true of the timber industry, whose products are often indispensable for supporting the galleries of the coal seams in the mines, and forest management is one link in the chain of complementary labors that will culminate in the manufacture of a bicycle, a frying pan, a bottle of perfume or a wristwatch. Inversely, the timber industry requires the help of the metal industry that supplies the axes, the chainsaws, the skidders, the trucks and the tractors to transport the logs to the sawmills that will cut them. Everything is

interconnected, everything is linked, we cannot repeat this often enough, and unless we want to return to the economy of the primitive tribal group, which would be impossible anyway due to the density of the population, we have to consider the creation of a vast confederation of industrial production.

There are relatively independent activities which, besides the supply of raw materials that some people or enterprises may obtain locally, need not be directed in accordance with a general plan. However, the energy industry which, in addition to coal, supplies electricity, petroleum and natural or manufactured gas, together with the chemical industry, are auxiliary to all the other industries. Without energy—and this is a platitude—all industries would be paralyzed and the only kind of production that would be possible would be basic artisanal production that would be insufficient for ensuring a modern standard of living.

We must also mention the role played by transport. In 1957, the French railroads alone carried two hundred seventeen million tons of commodities, including fifty-four million six hundred thousand tons of coal, thirty-six million eight hundred thousand tons of minerals and more than twenty-six million tons of metallurgical products. More than sixty-six million tons of diverse products were shipped on the inland waterway network of rivers and canals, including petroleum products and construction materials. In 1958, truck transport, constantly expanding, was responsible for the shipment of two hundred fifteen million tons, most of it on “short-haul”, that is, short distances, while the rail network is used for “long-haul”, or long distance shipping. And of course, all the products destined for the cities, the grains, the meat, the milk, the oils, the fabrics, the clothing, the hundreds of thousands of articles required by the populations of every locality do not arrive at their destination except by way of these means of transport that constitute the vascular system of the great body of society.

Just like the energy producing industries upon which they rely, unless we want to return to the times of the horse and wagon, they are indispensable for the economic life of the population.

We may conclude from this circumstance that all industries and all means of transport must be coordinated within the framework of this totality of general productive activities and that all of them, from the very first moment, must examine the practical means for unifying, ordering, and harmonizing their efforts. The Power Generation Federation must receive from all the other industries their respective demands with regard to the necessary total number (necessarily an approximation, and reserves will also have to be calculated to provide a margin for error) of Kilowatts, of tons of coal and oil and gasoline, and of millions of cubic meters of gas. These four essential aspects of energy and lighting must constitute a totality, whereas in capitalist society they are often opposed to one another, in an absurd rivalry.⁶ All of these factors will oblige the coal miners, the gas workers and the electric power plant workers to unite in one vast organization, with its corresponding regional and local sections. Once again we see that certain traditional structures will be disrupted. The miners who extract the iron ore and those who extract the coal do not have to be members of the same industrial organization just because they work underground. The former will have to be members of the Federation of the Metal Industry, while the latter will be members of the Power and Light Federation.

All these Federations, furthermore, whose directive committees will function side by side, will coordinate their complementary activities with regard to means and ends, thanks to a higher coordinating body that will to a certain extent constitute the functional directive center of the national economy. The Industrial Confederation will at its highest levels unite the technicians-delegates elected by the congresses of the various Industrial Federations in order to constitute the Confederal Inter-Industrial Committee.

The very close links thus established will allow for the resolution, as they arise, of the problems posed by the maintenance of relations between these diverse activities.

Thus, we shall have:

At the base, the specialized enterprises and their councils.

Above them, the local industrial committees.

Above the local industrial committees, the regional industrial federations, with the coordination committees elected by the regional assembly of delegates.

Above these bodies, the National Federation of each industry, which will have its own periodic congresses, attended by the regional delegates, led by the Committee of Technicians elected at these congresses, which will be responsible, in accordance with the directives issued, for coordinating general activity on the national plane.

And finally, the national inter-industrial committee.

[Chart 1—Depiction of the Federal Industrial Organization.][Chart omitted]

DECENTRALIZATION AND THE ORGANIZATION OF INDUSTRY

Before we address the issue of the structures of the federalist organization, we believe it would be useful to provide some figures that will show that, from the practical point of view—and not just from the point of view of theory or principles—industrial decentralization is an absolute necessity.

In 1954, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), the Paris region had six million three hundred thousand inhabitants, that is, 14.3 percent of the population of France. Yet it is home to twenty-three percent of the industrial wage workers. Sixty percent of France's aeronautics workers, 56.2 percent of the workers in its electrical equipment industry, and sixty-four percent of its aluminum foundry workers are located in the Paris region; fifty percent of France's copper and copper alloy workers, and fifty percent of its zinc, lead and tin workers, eighty percent of the country's high-pressure alloy manufacturing workers, sixty-five percent of its machinery production workers, seventy-one percent of its paint and varnish manufacturing workers, sixty-five percent of its plaster manufacturing workers (which nonetheless would appear to be easy to produce throughout the country), ninety-five percent of its gas meter manufacturing workers, eighty percent of those who manufacture water meters, and ninety-two percent of its auto workers.

We must also mention that one third of the personnel employed in France in the "liberal professions", dominated by parasitism, are in Paris; that twenty-nine percent of the public service employees live in the Paris region, which shows just how under-represented the other parts of France are in this regard; and that twenty-six percent of the employees of the transport sector are also concentrated in the same region.

Having called attention to these facts, we shall try to set forth the outlines of a decentralized organization of industry.

We have seen that between the organization of local production and that of national production, an intermediate regional organization is interposed. This latter organization may assume multiple forms.

Let us assume that in the city of Lyon, furniture is manufactured for the entire Department of the Rhône, and that its furniture industry also assembles furniture whose parts are manufactured in the Rhône Department as well as the Departments of Aix, Savoy, Isere, the Loire and Saone-et-Loire. This manufacturing and assembly cluster will result in the construction of an inter-departmental Federation of Furniture Workers. However, should the woodworkers of Provence lack raw materials, they would be obliged to appeal to the Federation whose headquarters is in Lyon.

Thus, diverse departmental federations will join the National Federation, not as a result of the capricious ruling of a central committee, even one elected by a congress, but as a result of the vital requirements of consumption and the possibilities of the labor process. Thanks to this national institution that will proceed to undertake a census of the raw materials available nationally, and which will be informed concerning the potential of production of each zone, the regions experiencing shortages will systematically direct their requests to the regions possessing surpluses, which will prevent one department from being overwhelmed with requests when these requests should be evenly distributed among the other departments with a surplus.

Here we have the elements of a federalism that will combine autonomy and cohesion, true self-determination and an overall plan. This is only one aspect of what we shall call decentralization, which we must attempt to implement as completely as possible, in order to prevent the formation of rigid and authoritarian apparatuses contrary to life and liberty. There are other possibilities for this terrain. We shall enumerate a few of them.

The federalist and, to a certain extent, centralized management⁷ that proceeds from the bottom to the top and from the top to the bottom, one that will allow for rational planning, will be neither necessary nor indispensable for all industries, especially for those which have a local character. In a small city where shoes, household objects, fabrics and the furniture required for local consumption is produced, either by assembly line or by hand, it would seem to be unnecessary for these activities to enter into the organic circuit of production directed by the National Federation. And this would be an excellent measure for helping to prevent, to the greatest extent possible, the general mechanization and standardization of human activities. Even so, for the usefulness of the knowledge itself, cities of every size, and even the small villages that would like to participate, could, simply for information purposes, provide statistics concerning their production and consumption.

Let us consider the construction industry. Building houses and public buildings, and urban planning, are local activities, which should be directly organized by the localities involved. More precisely, they should be organized by the specialists elected by these localities, or by their professional institutions: architects, public health experts, delegates of the residents, and representatives of the construction workers. Contrary to the precepts of syndicalism, these tasks are not entrusted solely to the trade union. In this case, as in all others, the consumer must lead the producer, demand must orient production.

A National Confederation of the Construction Industry will not have to perform the same kind of role performed by the National Confederation of the Textile Industry or the Chemical Industry. Decisions will have to be made instead on the basis of local conditions, including matters relating to regional architectural styles, which cannot be directed by a centralized national directive committee, since it is not only necessary to “conceive” the styles, as would take place in the best cases, but also “feel” them, in the context of the ambience of each region, the spirit of the countryside, and that of the inhabitants, the love of the land, and even local history. In this way we could in the future avoid a repetition of the monstrosities inflicted on so many cities in France after the last war, where bureaucrat-architects built barracks- and prison-like buildings, which totally spoiled the cities due to the incompatibility of their lines with the characteristics of the countryside.

Thus, the organization of the workers of the construction industry can only be national for a certain kind of planning pertaining to population growth, statistical projects, imbalances or reforms. Its main purpose would be to ensure the distribution of raw materials, of materials whose extraction, manufacture, and preparation are often localized (around the Loire, the manufacture of cement, etc.).

But a Federation of local workers, which it would appear to us to be preferable to call an “industry trade union”, should be formed immediately, and it should unite all the trades that participate in construction: excavators, bricklayers, laborers, plasterers, plumbers, painters, glaziers, architects, engineers, draftsmen, master craftsmen, etc. The various technical sections will be united by the community of labor.

From this perspective, the professional corporative trade unions have long lacked any reason to exist, not even in the contemporary social struggles, and it is surprising to see that this kind of division still exists in many sectors of the working class.

If, from the very first moments of the movement, we do not eliminate these vestiges of the past, it is likely that, due to a lack of solidarity and fraternal spirit, the revolution will not lead to the construction of a new world. If we do not make an effort to unify our forces, on the level of life and in our hearts, our revolution will not have a truly socialist, or syndicalist or libertarian, character, and it will be stillborn.

The trade union of the construction industry, however, will only be one of many trade unions of industry. The national federations represent the vertical aspect of the organization. The trade unions of industry, and

the local federations of the various trade unions of the different industries, represent the horizontal, eminently decentralizing, aspect of the organization.

Let us suppose that, in an average-sized city, after the necessary classifications have been made, that all economic activities together comprise thirty basic industries, including urban transport.

The thirty corresponding trade unions would, on the one hand, be constituted by two hundred or three hundred technically-classified trade sections, each of which is conjoined with the category that corresponds with its general activity, in order to prevent the rivalries that caused such harm for the corporations of the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the trade unions of industry will constitute a bond uniting all of them organically. Quite often, the activities of certain industries are directly complementary. Thus, the supply of materials for construction to the workers of the construction sector, of wood to the carpenters, to the furniture workers, of certain kinds of machines to the various workshops, etc. This would facilitate the fullest integration at a local level, true self-determination of a humanist type, and, for each person, an awareness of the activities of the whole.

But if economic decentralization is absolutely necessary in view of the fact that the Paris region is a monstrous conglomeration of factories, workshops, and offices, which since the time of Louis XIV has absorbed a large part of the country's life and substance, paid for by all of France, industrial reorganization also appears to be a necessity, in a rational and "humanly" organized economy.

In agriculture, more or less quickly depending on regional conditions, the absolute imperative of concentrating the land will be imposed as an unavoidable necessity, instead of dividing the land into separate parcels, which is the offspring of private property, practiced over the course of the centuries. We will have to wait many more years, in the capitalist countries, to attain a more sensible system of organization and distribution for farming.

We must say, however, that some progress has already been made in this regard, thanks to the efforts of the various Ministries of Agriculture whose technicians, following the recommendations that agronomists, economists and specialized engineers have been making for many years, have slowly begun to plan and then implement this trend towards concentration which, in turn, can only acquire the necessary momentum for success by way of the support of the peasants themselves. In this connection, the professional and cooperative mutual aid societies of the peasants have also played an important part.

Yet in France there is also an equally unfortunate trend towards industrial fragmentation, which a social transformation will have to strive to remedy as soon as possible. And this is true of even the most centralized countries, which demonstrates the inherent disorder of a non-socialized economy.

Thus, although at least twenty-three percent of French industry is concentrated in the Paris region, ninety-seven percent of the industrial enterprises of this region (one hundred sixty thousand enterprises!) each employ fewer than fifty persons, and we all know that in modern industry, fifty people is an insufficient number for most industries.

If we take France as a whole, the statistics for the year 1959 show that in the chemical industry, which must be one of the most concentrated industries, 62.5 percent of the enterprises employ between one and six wage workers; 32.6 percent employ between seven and fifty; 4.1 percent, between fifty and two hundred; and 0.8 percent employ more than two hundred wage workers.

The furniture industry has thirty-four thousand "enterprises" which employ one hundred ten thousand people, or approximately three persons per enterprise. Sixty-two percent of the French sawmills employ fewer than five workers each; twenty-three thousand two hundred fifty workshops only employ thirty-seven thousand eight hundred people (as you can see, small business predominates in this industry); twenty-seven percent each employ between six and twenty people, and only eleven percent each employ more than twenty.

It is possible to choose a happy median between the small, all-too-small enterprise, dirty and barely profitable, and the gigantic enterprise. During the Spanish Revolution, our comrades everywhere

implemented the changes dictated by economics and good sense, uniting the workers, the artisans and the technical equipment of the small workshops in much larger workplaces, as much for the benefit of the producers who could thus work in more hygienic and comfortable working conditions, as for profitability, thanks to the reduction of overhead costs, energy expenses, etc.

Returning to France, the industry involved in the production of metals is one of those which, for the good of the workers as well as that of the consumers, must be organized in a modern way, and therefore must be sufficiently concentrated, when this is necessary. The statistics for 1959 show that 82.2 percent of the enterprises in this industry employ 17.7 percent of its wage workers; 10.5 percent employ 26.3 percent; 0.9 percent employ 20.8 percent of the workers of the industry; and 0.2 percent employ 35.2 percent. Here we encounter one of the characteristic features of capitalism, for, besides the automated enterprises, it is not always true that the large enterprise is more profitable than the average sized one. Beyond a certain level, the general operational expenses, and the costs of bureaucratic personnel, management, etc., are proportionally higher.

Let us consider the food industry. 90.7 percent of the enterprises in this industry employ between one and six people each; 8.6 percent employ between seven and one hundred. These numbers demonstrate that in this category, extremely tiny enterprises predominate. The rest, comprising 1.6 percent of the enterprises, are large enterprises. But one need only enter a sugar refinery, a chocolate or pasta factory, or a vegetable or fish cannery, or even a flour mill, to understand that, from every perspective, the artisanal enterprise, so often defended in the name of freedom, but where man is even more enslaved than in a large enterprise, is obsolete.

We see the same situation in the pulp, printing and paper industry. Eighty-four percent of the enterprises in this industry each employ between one and six persons; 15.1 percent employ between seven and one hundred persons; only 0.8 percent of the enterprises exceed this number of employees. Always extremes, and disequilibrium.

Finally, for the textile industry, concerning which one might assume that it is exclusively composed of large factories, we provide the following figures: 88.4 percent of the enterprises in this industry each employ between one and six persons; 10.5 percent employ between seven and one hundred persons; forty-five percent of all the employees of the industry are concentrated in 1.1 percent of the factories.

The average number of employees per enterprise is four for the food industry, thirty-seven for the chemical industry, six for the leather industry, six for the construction industry, ten for basic metals. Only the mining industry (more than nine hundred persons per enterprise) and the steel industry (approximately five hundred eighty) have the numbers that are appropriate for large enterprises; numbers that are entirely justified, given the kind of activities they pursue. As for the rest, we shall see just how far they are subjected to reorganization, which, we repeat, is only possible in a socialized society.

DISTRIBUTION

Consumption orders production

As we pointed out above, we do not conceive the regional industrial organization as being based on the departmental borders or old provinces of France. The expression, “economic region”, is explicit, and supersedes any political-administrative carving up of the nation into pieces of arbitrarily defined territories. As for the role that will be played by the National Committee of an industry, it will not be that of an absolute authority; we nonetheless believe it is acceptable to depict its most general features.

The need for products obtained from or manufactured in certain territorial zones, for the entire territory of France, cannot be calculated and grasped exclusively from the local standpoint. With respect to fuels, energy, industrial food products, fabrics, paper, certain kinds of wood, plastic materials, chemical products, etc., only precise statistics on a national scale give us a valid idea of the necessary quantities and qualities of each product. How, for example, can a metal factory in Amiens, Orleáns or Grenoble be certain that it continues to manufacture what is needed, depending on the demand and the needs?

This leads us to posit, for a certain number of industries, for which we cannot provide a complete enumeration in advance, a system of production-distribution that, in our opinion, should simplify some of the problems that we need to resolve.

Let us consider the case of agricultural machinery. The peasants of Loiret, or their cooperative organizations and labor groups, could request them from one or another workshop. But what if the workshop, or factory, which we shall situate, for instance, in Orleans, cannot satisfy the demand of the peasants of Loiret? We will be told that the customers need only go to Montargis, or Vierzon. The factories in these two cities, however, may still be unable to deliver the tractors. This example could be extended to all the products of France as a whole: the result would be general disorder, shortages here, surpluses there, which would reproduce the worst aspects of capitalist chaos.

In order to prevent this, the socialized economy must, as soon as possible, organize warehouses for distribution or shipment, and it is to these warehouses that the peasants or the peasants' organizations will go for their tractors. It is not the producers and the consumers, but the distributors and the consumers, who will be in contact with each other. It is via the channel of these distributors, to whom the tractors will be sent, that the Metal Workers Federation, and the corresponding manufacturing sections of this Federation, will be apprised of the needs that must be satisfied for different types of machinery (tractors, cultivators, mowers, spreaders, plows, rakes, sowers, etc.), because it is to them that the requests will be sent. With all the requests centralized by this multifaceted channel, the National Committee will be able to distribute the production orders to all the manufacturing centers in accordance with their respective capacities. One manufacturing center will receive an order for three thousand machines of various types; another, farther away, will be directed to produce a thousand of them, and yet another, one thousand one hundred and fifty, and all by the established deadlines. All requests, including those for duly foreseen reserve requirements, can only be satisfied in an orderly way thanks to this absolutely indispensable production-distribution organization.

The same system will apply to fabrics, canvas, dresses, and everything that concerns clothing.

Each locality will have at least one distribution center. Every retail store will be in contact with the distribution center to which it is linked.

Let us take a look at Paris and its eighty districts, each of which will have its own distribution center.

And each district, according to its size, will have fifteen, twenty, or thirty retail stores, strategically located. Each retail store will send requests once or twice a week to its supply center, specifying its sales figures and its immediate expected requirements. Specialists know, more or less, how long different fabrics will last (wool, cotton, silk, rayon, various other synthetic fabrics), depending on how much they are used. Standard variations are for the most part firmly established. Supplementary variations can be ascertained as they occur. And all the textile distribution centers in every city and town in France (there might be, depending on each case, one for every ten or fifteen towns, and one store in each town. Practice will suggest the best solutions), all the distribution centers—we maintain—will communicate all their requests to the National Federation of Textile Production to which they belong, or to its different local or regional manufacturing sections, which will transmit them to the National Committee.

The National Committee, for its part, will allocate the work assignments, always in accordance with the known production capacities of all the factories and workshops.

The same method can be applied to linens, shoes, clothing, mass-produced furniture, home appliances, etc.

Once again, however, it will be observed to what extent it will be necessary to calculate, starting now, precisely how much means of production, labor power, technical material and energy resources are available or needed.

[Chart 2: the consumption-production mechanism and its linkages

1. Production Centers
2. Wholesale Distribution Centers
3. Retail Stores

The Production Centers (1) distribute the products that they manufacture to the Wholesale Distribution Centers (2). The latter distribute them to the Retail Stores.

The Retail Stores, in turn, send their requests to the Wholesale Distribution Centers, which transmit the statistics concerning the requested products to the Production Centers.

The Production Centers send all the requests to the National or Regional Coordination Center. The Coordination Center, depending on the industry in question and its method of organization, will allocate work orders to the various Production Centers. Manufacturing and distribution will continue, and production will increase or diminish, in accordance with current needs or existing reserves, information concerning which is also sent to the Coordination Center.

Once this schema has been generalized, it will be possible to engage in further decentralization, by way of the creation of more or less autonomous zones, when and where this is possible.][Chart omitted]

Yet again, we see just how important it is to take action immediately to elect responsible local, regional and national committees. If this is accomplished with the necessary precision and speed, we may be sure that the degree of revolutionary change will be such that a profound transformation of the social structure will take place and it will be impossible to return to the old order.

The financial mechanism

Considering the abundance and the variety of products offered for consumption, on the one hand, and the multiplication of needs, on the other, it is not possible, without ignoring economic and psychological realities, to defend the theory of free consumption, or what has commonly been called, “taking from the pile”. A way must be found to adapt consumption to the possibilities of production, one that is not an attack on individual freedom, as generalized rationing would be, regardless of its form. In our opinion the most valid way would be to use a monetary symbol. The only objection that could be raised against this symbol would be the danger of hoarding. But we have already pointed out that it is only in a society where one can make enough money to build a workshop, or an apartment building, or open up a store, that hoarding constitutes a means by which others may be exploited.

This scale of accumulation surpasses what one can earn on a basic wage. Furthermore, a certain amount of trafficking, commercial or otherwise, is necessary to achieve this result, which is inconceivable in a socialized economy. Private commerce no longer exists in the latter; to the contrary, collective distribution prevails; as for housing, it will be administered by the municipality.

Then there is production—how can you assume, if you devote the slightest thought to the matter, that in an egalitarian society there will be people who are so stupid that they would allow themselves to be exploited, voluntarily, by new bosses? And where will the latter obtain their raw materials, which society will have the right to refuse to give them?

Finally, and we could very well have begun with this point, this egalitarian society will also have the right—even if, hypothetically, some persons allow themselves to be exploited—to intervene and confiscate the means of production of those who would volunteer to serve the new exploiter.

The accumulation of money, therefore, will no longer have to be feared, and it will not even be necessary to introduce the fungible money (with an expiration date) that is advocated by the theorists of “abundance”. There will be a need to preserve the use of money—regardless of its form—for a number of years, for certain purchases. A simple bank account could also be used to solve this problem.

Thus, we are supporters of the use of money.

Only an autarchic and very primitive economy would render money unnecessary.

And even all the primitive tribes and peoples who practice exchange have some kind of money, which assumes a multitude of forms.

The money we advocate will not have the purpose of facilitating these exchanges, but to facilitate and regulate distribution. We conceive it in the following manner: let us assume that the volume of commodities for sale and reimbursed services represents, in France, according to the most precise calculations possible, ten billion francs per year.

This implies the issue of an equivalent sum of purchase coupons, distributed pro rata among individuals and families, a “wage fund” like the one that is determined annually in Russia, but which, naturally, we shall distribute in a more equitable way.

Each individual and each family will have, according to the established scales, that portion of the purchasing power that corresponds to them.

What mechanism will be used to distribute this purchasing power?

It seems to me that the municipality would be the most suitable intermediary. It would be possible, after ascertaining the number of inhabitants of each town, to send from the Issuing Institute the necessary sum of money, which would be distributed to each home and, where applicable, to each individual. We shall refrain from going into details concerning the scale that might be established based on the ages of the children. I believe it is of interest to point out that this kind of distribution, carried out by a system that would occupy a position outside of and above the different trades, professional bodies and industries, would possess the advantage of being able to forestall any attempts on the part of the workers of one professional grouping to make more money than the other workers and would be able to abolish in one stroke all the outrageous inequalities of pay that exist in capitalist society.

This distribution of purchasing power will assume a human character, rather than a professional or trade-based one. It will be truly egalitarian, and this is the real socialism.

By making their purchases in the distribution centers, the consumers will hand over the money that will be returned by these centers to the local sections of the Issuing Institute, and once this money has once again been concentrated in the Institute, the latter will once again introduce it, at the proper moment, into the limited monetary circuit that we have just described.

It will therefore be unnecessary to accumulate and invest enormous amounts of financial capital in order to carry out public works projects. It will be sufficient, thanks to the federations of industry, to bring together the necessary labor power with the technical resources, the machines, the raw materials and the energy supplied by the various industries and specialized professional bodies, whose workers will have received their annual wages, just as in all the other industries.

A general principle of economics is that every commodity or every service costs the time spent by men in its manufacture, or the totality of efforts utilized to obtain it and distribute it.

In capitalist society, we must add the profit of the entrepreneur, and that of the shareholders and the various intermediaries, that is, the “profit” of, or the interest on capital. Once this has disappeared, all that remains is labor time.

Now that labor time is reimbursed, by way of the distribution of the annual purchasing power, it will be understood—and we insist on this—that we shall need to provide the labor power, the machines, the raw materials, and the energy, but not enormous sums of money. The appeal to loans, to savings, to private capital, will no longer have any reason to exist.

It seems to us that one more clarification is in order. This involves the problem of what can be done during the transitional period with regard to the monetary question, since the outline we just sketched is only applicable to a completely socialized society.

Naturally, it will be necessary to retain the money of capitalist society for a while. Its replacement will require a quite prolonged period of adaptation. In the meantime, it will be inevitable that the usual mode of circulation will be used, while immediately limiting injustice and inequality, until the new society makes them disappear.

Those who have made their living, by way of their wages or their labor, unless they are notorious exploiters, will keep their savings. Those who have hoarded gold, as is the case with numerous peasants, some of the more fortunate wage workers, and members of the middle class, will have the opportunity to exchange this gold for the new currency when the latter is introduced. You cannot, often without committing a real injustice, just take it away from them. Nor would this be any good, because in this case the gold will still remain buried.

It could be objected that such measures will preserve, for a certain period, the inequality inherited from capitalist society. We do not deny this. There is not, however, any ideal and perfect solution, one that is applicable within twenty-four hours. It will only be possible to limit the harm inflicted by the prolonged existence of a continually reduced sphere of privileges, by means of a serious control exercised over the progress of the monetary transformations, when they are implemented.

The method of allocation

We have mentioned distribution centers for the sale of consumer goods. Indeed, it is advisable to socialize this sector as soon as possible, in order to free it from the obstacle represented by private commerce. In France, there are at least three times as many stores and shops than are necessary⁸ and these traders, wholesalers and retailers, intermediaries of every description, have the entire nation at their mercy, and impose whatever prices they please and fleece the consumers. During periods of social upheaval and revolution, they enjoy a continuous enhancement of their fortunes, they are the masters of the situation, and they become, as in Paris during the French Revolution and the Commune, the most effective agents of the counterrevolution.

The provisioning of a city is an immense task. That is why we shall engage in an extensive discussion, in our chapter on agriculture, concerning the essential importance of the peasants' producers' cooperatives, and the urban consumers' cooperatives or distribution centers of a communal or socialized nature.

If there are one hundred grocery stores in a city district, you may be sure that twenty stores, organized by the commerce employees' trade union, together with those owners willing to join the collective effort, could advantageously replace them.

Perhaps here as well it will be necessary to posit, while the reorganization of the trade unions is taking place, a general institution that could lead us towards a definitive structure. The employees will get together and calculate the number of stores that are necessary for each district, depending on the size of the district and its population density. Technical advisors, with knowledge of demographic issues and each city's particularities, will be able to help them complete this project.

What we are saying about the grocery stores also applies to butchers shops, dairy products, haberdashery, hardware, etc.

In small cities, many of these products can be sold in stores with many branch outlets. These various solutions could even be applied in big cities, such as the employment of stores with many outlets. These solutions will be perfected in accordance with circumstances, and the preferences of the buyers. We cannot provide in advance a detailed plan for all sectors, without indulging in fiction.

One could also foresee (others have done so before us) communal stores for distribution, especially in rural areas, for the sale of the numerous articles (groceries, household goods, stationery, etc.) that derive from multiple sources, and whose sales of small quantities are not of such an importance as to require detailed accounting to assure the mechanism of input and output, consumption-production-consumption, even one as simple as the one we outlined above. The “industrial concentration” which is just as necessary in numerous areas as decentralization is in others, will certainly facilitate this process of adjustment. In all such cases, however, distribution will be an autonomous and local function.

The same distribution cooperatives, linked with this social function and acting jointly in all aspects of economic life, will no longer possess their current character. They will become collective stores for distribution in the service of the entire population. In any event, whether you call them cooperatives, communal stores, distribution centers, the name does not matter. What is important is the institution itself, which must be studied in advance and in detail, in order to be capable of organizing it when the time comes.

There will undoubtedly be, for a certain time, individual traders, but these must be compelled, under the penalty of severe sanctions, to sell at prices fixed by the price commission, which will be composed of producers, distributors and consumers. In this way even the provisionally tolerated private merchants will be, for all practical purposes, socialized.

Will rationing be necessary?

There can be no question that the difficulties of the first days of the change will make rationing necessary for some products. Perhaps one or another agricultural region will refuse to send its food products; perhaps certain colonial commodities would be unavailable for a certain period. In such cases, rationing cards will be issued. It is of great importance that the technical personnel who support the revolution should plan in advance with regard to the means to maintain international trade at as high a level as possible. It is also of great importance to plan in advance with regard to the difficulties that could be posed by the various regions that are the sources of provisions for the cities. This is why, we must repeat, the cooperative bond between the cities and the countryside is of such major importance. This is why the urban workers must prepare the intellectual, psychological and material foundations for fraternal contacts with the workers of the rural areas.

AGRICULTURE

Peasants and workers

We shall now address the issue of the peasantry. Because it is indispensable for the urban workers, especially the industrial workers, to understand its importance, if they do not want to once again undergo a hunger blockade, such as the workers of Paris experienced in 1848, or the active hostility that the “rurals” displayed in 1871 towards the insurgents of the Commune. The old mindset that accused the socialists of being “re-distributors” is not entirely dead among the inhabitants of the countryside, and it is upon this hostility, at times still latent, that reactionary governments, conservative parties and the privileged classes will rely in order to once again impose, in a mortal struggle, the hunger blockade or the force of arms on the industrial centers, in a situation of social transformation.

We must point out, however, that the situation today is not exactly identical to the situation that prevailed in 1848 or 1871. First of all, the proportion of inhabitants of the rural areas, which was at that time—especially in 1848—much larger than that of the cities, has been reversed. Today the peasants represent twenty-five percent of the population of France. In addition, a significant number of them have a completely different mentality. Social and socialist ideas have penetrated the rural world.

The trade union organizations, the cooperatives, the mutual aid associations, the sporting clubs and other groups, have generated relations of solidarity and mutual support, and created among the peasants a spirit and a practice of solidarity which have transformed the man of the countryside, giving him a more extensive knowledge of the world. In addition to the availability of an extensive selection of different kinds of newspapers and magazines, frequent contact with the cities, thanks to the multiplication of means of transport—railroads, buses, cars, motorcycles—has narrowed the gap between country and city and has

allowed for the establishment of bonds between the inhabitants of the cities and the countryside. Numerous peasant organizations, both corporative and inter-corporative, have their headquarters in various cities in France. These contacts and continuous relations, and access to more comprehensive information, have changed many things.

Finally, in everyday work and in practical life, solidarity—de facto inter-dependence—has also been established. The city cannot live without the countryside, but the countryside is even less capable of living without the city. Every tractor, every agricultural machine—mowers, reapers, etc.—would cease to function without the gasoline, the petroleum and the petroleum derivatives that are supplied by the refineries located in the industrial centers. These machines are provided by the factories and workshops, as are the fabrics, the clothing, the furniture, household appliances, individual means of transport—along with the fuel the latter need to function—and, finally, almost everything that constitutes the elements of modern life, without which the farmer, his wife and their children would be condemned to return to the status of serfs of the glebe, the poor beasts of toil that they were in the past.

The workers of the city and those of the countryside must acquire an increasingly more comprehensive understanding of the fact that they have a shared destiny in society. The former cannot exist without the grains, the meat, the vegetables, the fruits, and all the products of the land that are provided by the latter.

But the workers of the countryside can produce nothing, or almost nothing, not only without the machines and fuel, but also without the chemical fertilizers, the herbicides and pesticides, and the vaccines for the animals. Even more importantly, in many rural areas they do not even produce a significant portion of their own food needs, since, specialized agriculture has made great inroads in the countryside.

The Midi supplies wine to Beauce and receives wheat, potatoes and sugar.

The Southwest supplies milk and butter to part of the East and the Paris basin; it receives machinery, some of its fruit, and certain vegetables. The Atlantic and Mediterranean coastal areas supply the interior with fish and receive meat and butter. All of these movements of goods would be impossible without the railroads and motorized transport, which are of an essentially industrial character and which also depend on the cities.

This is what the peasants must understand. They are in the same position as the industrial workers, and although their situations are formally different, they are victims of a form of exploitation that both groups have an interest in eliminating. Nor are we referring exclusively to their exploitation by the state, since the taxes the peasants pay in France are much lower than those that we, the wage workers of factories and workshops, pay, without any possibility of avoiding paying them.

There are other kinds of theft that we shall not overlook.

When, at the beginning of 1957, the Christian Democratic leader Pierre Pflimlin was Minister of Agriculture, he declared that the producers had been paid a total of two hundred billion francs for all the agricultural products they supplied during the previous year, but these same agricultural products were sold to the consumers for a total of seven hundred billion francs. An honest organization, impossible in our current society, would make it possible to pay the producers another one hundred fifty billion francs, and charge the consumer one hundred fifty billion francs less. In such a case both the city and the countryside gain. But this orgy of pillage called capitalist society has allowed middlemen of all kinds to pocket five hundred billion francs—or four hundred fifty billion if you deduct the costs of transport and storage incurred by various other stages of the distribution process.

Information has come to light concerning countless cases of products (artichokes, cauliflower, tomatoes, beans), for which the producers are paid a few francs per kilo, but which are sold in a neighboring city for one hundred or one hundred fifty francs per kilo, or the cases where the farmer must let fruit rot on the trees because the middleman will not even pay him enough for the fruit to pay the workers to pick it. And everyone knows that the meat problem has not been resolved either, not only because the middlemen took, and still take, the lion's share, but, worse yet, because the lack of rational organization raised the cost of production, or caused and still causes significant losses, whether due to the fact that the herds are too far

from their pastures, or that the place where the animals are raised is too far from the slaughterhouse, but especially because the structure of the exploitation of agriculture does not allow the means of production to develop in a rational and scientific way.

In one case, it is the lack of financial resources. In another case, the tiny size of the enterprises renders the necessary organization impossible. Elsewhere, even the means of transport are lacking for the timely delivery of the products, or if the means of transport exist, they are too expensive.

Even when these difficulties do not exist, however, insoluble problems arise. We have seen the wheat harvest for several years in succession reach one hundred or one hundred twenty million quintals, while, during the same period, the production of wine and milk, butter, fruit, and greenhouse vegetables, has resulted in surpluses.

This was catastrophic for the peasants because this society is of such a nature that an increase in the amount of goods, instead of being a cause for jubilation and satisfaction, is a cause of misfortune and poverty due to the decline in prices.

What is the response of the rural producers? They call upon the state to assume responsibility for these surpluses, by means of subsidies, in order to ensure their sale on foreign markets. In the other countries, however, the same things are happening, and French products must confront Italian, Dutch, Danish, American, Australian, New Zealand, English, Algerian and Spanish products in international competition. Our sense of justice tells us that these solutions are bad ones, and that others must be sought. The injustice of this situation is also demonstrated by the fact that the other producers, the exploited workers of the cities, pay, thanks to the high taxes deducted from our wages, the subsidies granted by the state to support the sale of the surplus agricultural products on foreign markets. After all, it is from our pockets that the state takes the money with which it concedes subsidies and price supports to the wine producers of the Midi, when they cannot sell their wine; to the grain producers of Beauce, Brie and the North, when they cannot sell their wheat; to the butter and meat producers of Charente or Normandy, when they cannot sell their butter or meat; and to the cattlemen of the Center or Savoy, when they cannot sell their cattle.

Furthermore, due to the capitalist mechanism, in addition to the corporate dividends, the profits of the employers and middlemen and the excessive expenses of the state, the peasants also pay too much for the industrial products they buy.

The producers of the city and the producers of the countryside must therefore seek a rational, just and sincere solution, which can be nothing other than the organization of industrial and agricultural production for the benefit of all.

Not all the producers of the countryside, however, have the same interest in this reorganization of collective life.

According to the general census of Agriculture carried out in 1956-1957, published by the INSEE, concerning the structure of agricultural ownership in France, the latter is distributed as follows:

Area Cultivated (hectares) Total Area (hectares) Percentage of Total

Less than 1	85,700	0.3
1-2	333,000	1.0
2-5	1,377,000	4.3
5-10	3,458,000	10.8
10-20	7,536,000	23.4
20-50	11,167,000	34.7
50-100	4,968,000	15.5
100-200	2,196,000	6.8
More than 200	1,037,000	3.2
Total	32,157,700	

Out of more than thirty-two million hectares, half, at least, of the total belongs to small property owners. And quite often, the land owned by small to middle level property owners (who own thirty to fifty hectares) is of inferior quality. It is obvious that profound reforms are necessary in order to improve the social condition of the farmers.

There are approximately two million farms in France, yet, between the smallest and the largest properties, the social problem assumes a different form. Besides a minority of large landowners who exploit a large contingent of wage workers, however, the other, medium size, small and very small landowners, the small farmers, and the sharecroppers—who constitute one quarter of the agricultural population and are often despised in certain regions of France—can understand the necessity of and the interest they, together with the entire collectivity of which they form a part, have in the change we advocate. They must understand that their standard of living will improve, and their labors will be lightened, that their fate can be much happier, their moments of rest more frequent, thanks to the collective organization that we are advocating. And we must immediately make it clear that this collective organization, however desirable it may be, must by no means be imposed by force. We shall nonetheless make an attempt to describe what seems to us to be the ideal. Then we shall address the question of how it may be achieved in stages and intermediate forms that would constitute real progress.

The Spanish experience

The ideal was realized in Spain, during the libertarian revolution of 1936-1939. It consisted in the expropriation of all the big landowners and the membership of all the small landowners in what were called the village collectives.

These collectives functioned as large producers cooperatives. They operated under the authority of the directives agreed upon by the general assemblies of the collectivists, which included the small landowners who contributed their land, their tools, and their cattle, and the wage workers, all of whom associated on equal terms.

A commission was elected to implement these directives. This commission included, in every collective, one delegate from each specialty—field crops, fruit, cattle, rice, olive oil production, oranges, vegetables, etc. Each delegate, who worked either a half-day or a full day, depending on the scale of his responsibilities, coordinated, together with the delegates of the work teams of his specialty, the work that had to be done. For example, in the zones characterized by diversified agricultural production, work was carried out in accordance with the succession of types of cultivation, the needs of each kind of production, and the location of the land. Wheat, grapes, olives, oranges, root crops, beets, various kinds of vegetables; the work teams were given their assignments by the general delegate, and they fulfilled their tasks. The hardest work was reserved for the youngest and strongest men. The lighter work was assigned to men over fifty years old. The elderly were assured of their livelihood, just like the other members of the collective, and devoted themselves to useful, but not compulsory, activities, which constituted for them a pastime.

The products belonged to the collective, generally composed of the entire population of the town, or almost the entire population. They were deposited in the communal storehouses.

The Supply Delegate organized exchange with the industrial regions.

He sent surplus agricultural products in exchange for fabrics, machinery, chemical fertilizers, books, household utensils, etc. The value of each product was calculated in pesetas, and the exchange transaction was carried out by means of a kind of *clearing* [in English in the original—English translator's note], as is customary in capitalist society, which often renders the use of money superfluous.

Locally, and for individuals, distribution was carried out by the communal storehouses, which in some towns were also called cooperatives. Distribution was characterized by one of two basic procedures. The first consisted in the distribution of products whose amounts were fixed in accordance with the size of the family by the assembly of the collective. There was no longer a monetary system and everyone was freed from the obsession, "if you do not have money, you do not eat".

The other procedure was characterized by the use of a kind of currency that was sometimes improvised, but more often official. A family wage was established, depending on the size of each household. The vicissitudes of the war and the inherent difficulties of such a complicated situation, where the political parties were creating countless obstacles, prevented these two systems from being unified into a single system, but the results that were obtained, frequently after only a few months, were decisive.

First they were decisive for the improvement of production, since the use of the land, the pastures, the irrigation systems, the various means of labor, and of the human labor itself, was much more rational.

Previously, one landowner may have possessed enough pastureland to raise twenty cows or one hundred sheep, but he only raised ten cows or thirty sheep. Another landowner may have had only enough land to raise four cows but he had ten of them, with the meager yields that we may assume would result.

Another landowner sowed wheat on land that was only fit for raising goats or sheep: he harvested eight quintals per hectare. The donkeys, the mules, and the horses that were employed to work the land, were distributed in accordance with the characteristic disorder of the prevailing social system. One peasant only had one donkey to plow a hard and rocky soil. Another had good mules, half of which would have been enough to work an easier soil. Rich landowners were the proud owners of a tractor that they operated two months a year, and then went unutilized the rest of the year, while the poorest peasants only had their two hands to till their soil.

The village collectives put an end to all this disorder. The tractors were used year-round, the strong mules were employed wherever they were needed and the donkeys were used for lighter duties.

More work was done with fewer animals, it was done more effectively, and it was done in a way that meant less toil for the workers. Lands that were to be used for cattle raising were allocated in accordance with the productivity of the soil. It is interesting to note that the rotation of pasturelands, which had been established in France for a number of years, although it was not yet generalized, emerged spontaneously in Spain as a result of the initiative of the collectives. The yields of meat and milk rose accordingly.

Communal stables were organized outside the towns, as well as henhouses and pig ranches, which separated the human beings from the animals and the flies, and from the accompanying filth. Women were liberated from the pitchfork, the wheelbarrow and the manure. The methods of cattle raising, applied in accordance with a general plan, made it possible for the number of pigs in the collective's pig farms, classified by age, to multiply as never before.

The animal husbandry facilities of the collectives, in a short time, doubled the number of rabbits, chickens, other fowl and eggs, to which everyone had equal access.

Agricultural yields also rose. Anyone who had the opportunity to survey the collectivized farms and compared the density of the wheat growing on them with that of the farms of the small landowners who refused to join the collectives, saw that the latter, despite the labor of their wives and children, obtained a much lower density of wheat. This was unavoidable because the collective organization possessed the more advanced technical means that allowed it to till the soil more effectively, and to give the crops, at the requisite stages of their growth, the indispensable attention, to more effectively utilize and organize the irrigation networks, to procure selected seeds or to plant them in the most effective manner, to intelligently utilize, thanks to the advice of agricultural technicians, the fertilizers or the lands whose soil chemistries often varied from one area to another.

These opportunities for improvement made possible a thirty percent increase in both the amount of land sowed with wheat and the yield per hectare, despite the mobilization of a large proportion of the youth, who had to go to the front to fight against Franco's army.

All of these factors, together with the disappearance of the owners of the large estates and exploiters of every kind, resulted in a doubling of the average standard of living of the peasants, if not more in some cases.

Let us try to imagine the results that would issue from such a form of organization in France, where the soil is generally more fertile and the climate more benign than in Spain.

Not only would the yields increase, but, above all, the lives of men and women will be infinitely more human, more pleasant, and more happy, in the domains affected by the numerous consequences that will accompany the major, large scale achievements. An abundant crop will not be a catastrophe and it will no longer be necessary to compete with the middlemen. We shall remind the reader of the example of the cattle accommodated in collective stables. Today, the small farmer, or his wife, cannot be absent from the farm for even one day: they are the slaves of the beasts in the pigsties, the stables and the paddocks. But when people take turns taking care of the animals, all the farmers will be able to enjoy their holiday. And when comrades who specialize in this kind of work come at the end of the day to take care of the animals, or the tractors, so that the drivers can take a break while their comrades take care of the horses or fix the machinery, this would be a conquest of a kind that only those who have practical experience of these things can fully appreciate.

Intermediate stages

Objections could be raised against our view which, in our opinion, are unfounded, but which we do not want to leave unaddressed.

The vast majority of the peasants feel love for their property, because in the jungle where they have always lived, and where, all too often, man has been a wolf to man, their property has signified (although not absolutely) their bread, the bread of their families, and a certain guarantee of freedom against the State and the powerful. In addition, it has allowed the peasants, within very restricted boundaries, to do “whatever profits them”, to exercise personal initiative, and to act in accordance with their own will.

We cannot ignore these facts. The Spanish libertarians did not ignore them, either. A large number of collectives gave each peasant family a piece of land, sufficient for the cultivation of some vegetables for household consumption or some flowers, or for raising chickens, rabbits, etc. The Russian government was forced to do the same thing when it established the *Kolkhozes*. It is naturally possible to foresee such possibilities, which do not conflict with overall collectivization.

The comparison we just made must be further clarified. Are the collectives of Spain, or any possible future cooperative and communal organizations we may imagine, really comparable to the *Kolkhozes*?

Categorically, no: the *Kolkhozes* were not the free creations of the Russian peasants, but constructs of the state and the state bureaucracy, imposed by the Communist Party, whose members exercise dictatorship over one and all. The *Kolkhozes* do not freely make decisions concerning their own affairs, but must implement the “norms” established without their consent, or even against their opposition; the political police terrorizes the inhabitants, no dissent may be expressed, there is a hierarchy of wages—an absolute negation of socialism, communism and economic equality—that is decreed from above, and, quite frequently, there are more bureaucrats than workers in the countryside. Under these conditions the hostility of the Russian peasants towards this false collectivism is quite understandable. And it is just as easily understood that all of this has nothing to do with the free collectives of Spain that we are taking as our model.

We also know that, considering the current conditions, we must not expect a general transformation, one that would be carried out as quickly as the one that was implemented in Spain, where more than half the land was collectivized within one year, and one in which no more than five in every thousand collectives failed.

We must therefore foresee stages, degrees of application that, without actually attaining to the condition of integral libertarian socialism, would imply a profound break with the past, and a real, immediate conquest.

We have seen just how much of France’s agricultural land is dominated by large landed property. In regions like Beauce, Brie, the departments of the Marne, L’Oise, L’Aisne, the Somme, the North and the Pas-de-Calais, it is often very important. In those farms that employ numerous workers, the task would involve merely expropriating the owners, which would be easy enough if the overall situation is favorable, as was

the case in June 1936, and forming management committees on each farm that would coordinate their activities through a local commission elected at a general assembly.

The various commissions would federate by departments and by agricultural regions. One may easily conceive of the birth of an inter-departmental grain Federation whose headquarters would be in Paris, which lies in the center of the great wheat growing areas of France.

In this case it would not be difficult to destroy individual property. But the problem is altogether different when we consider medium-sized or small-scale property.

It is obvious that the small cultivators would benefit from the formation of collectives, communes or agrarian cooperatives—the name does not matter—in order to obtain more output from their land, their tools and their work. Will they understand this? This is what we do not know, and therefore this is what they must be convinced of. Unity makes for strength, and division, for weakness. By uniting in communitarian cooperatives each person will bring about a happier life for himself and his family.

For we must not forget that this transformation has nothing to do with destroying the family home or abolishing individual property with regard to those things that are necessary for domestic life: house, furniture, etc. We think it is necessary to insist on this fact, in order to forestall the distortion of our ideas by the supporters of inequality. It is impossible to predict what attitudes the medium-sized landowners will display towards an attempt at collective organization. They will undoubtedly assume many forms. But for those for whom such a perspective is frightening, or for those to whom it may be unpleasant, we shall offer a solution that would be neither the preservation of the current situation, nor the generalized socialization that we would prefer. Furthermore, it is permitted to think that libertarian socialization could be realized, in part, on the basis of individual property, insofar as the latter does not imply the exploitation of man by man or inequality in the means of existence.

When we see a landowner who possesses sixty hectares of good land, and another landowner who possesses ten hectares of land of the same quality, we think of this as an injustice, and that this injustice must be rectified. But when the land the different owners possess is more or less equivalent, this injustice has disappeared. In this case one can speak of socialism—although a very insufficient kind of socialism—and this is how, with regard to the land problem, Proudhon understood it.

This kind of individualist socialism, however, must be complemented, to a certain extent, by the methods already utilized by the agricultural entrepreneurs of many countries. In Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy and the United States, the small entrepreneurs have formed collective organizations of every kind, which imply a development away from individualist practices. Cooperatives for buying agricultural machinery or for joint use of the machinery, cooperatives for the improvement of collective cattle-raising, fowl raising, pigs, preparing salt-pork, dairy production, viticulture, butter, for the storage of wheat in silos, refrigeration, storing potatoes, marketing the products, and their export: these cooperatives are innumerable, and constitute the dominant factor in the dynamism of modern agriculture, which would be much more dynamic still without the obstacles and the wrench in the works contributed by the society of underhanded collusion in which we live.

For today's cooperatives are sometimes exceedingly forgetful of the socialist and egalitarian principles of cooperation. We shall not overlook this fact, but now is not the time to discuss this topic. We would like, above all, to emphasize that this form of association could very well be a factor of transition, and that it has already begun to be such a factor of transition—it is necessary to repeat this—between individualism and collectivism.

In France itself, this formidable movement constitutes an undeniable proof of the possibility of organizing economic life on other foundations than those of mutual exploitation, traditional individual isolation and state decrees. Even a cursory examination of this movement allows us to say that it has great possibilities which must henceforth be extended and more intensely exploited, but that it presently has foundations upon which an immense new constructive project is possible.

We possess data from 1957. Since 1908 the total number of agrarian cooperatives has risen from two thousand two hundred to fifteen thousand. And their number is still rising. Here are the most important categories:

Various wine-related cooperatives 1,065 and 510 distilleries
Wheat-shipping cooperatives 950
Milling cooperatives 125
Seed-buying cooperatives 210
Fruit and vegetable cooperatives 700
Textile cooperatives 50
Vegetable oil cooperatives 92
Farm supply cooperatives (fertilizers, feed, agricultural machinery, etc.) 1,500
Cooperatives for joint use of machinery (data from 1959) 8,000

There are many other kinds of cooperatives that are too numerous to permit us to list all the categories. We would like to mention, however, the cooperatives for marl-based fertilizers, limestone-based fertilizers, drainage, artificial insemination, compound feeds for cattle, meat production, forest management, oil production, etc.

The value of all the commercial transactions carried out by these various cooperatives amounts to several hundred billion francs per year.

The cooperative cellars account for twenty-five percent of French wine and the cooperative silos ship approximately eighty-five percent of the wheat and sixty-six percent of the other grains from the domestic market in France.

The dairy cooperatives, butter cooperatives and cheese cooperatives have increased in number, in 1957, to two thousand six hundred, which are subdivided as follows:

Milk for direct consumption 200
Butter cooperatives 275
Cheese cooperatives 340
Ripening cooperatives 18
Marketing and sale cooperatives 300
Harvesting cooperatives 50
The "Fruterics" of Jura and the Alps⁹ 1,417

In 1952 the number of members of the milk cooperatives rose to three hundred fifty thousand out of one million seven hundred fifty thousand milk producers. But out of the eighty-two million hectoliters of milk sold by the industry, the cooperatives sold thirty-four million, or 41.4 percent of the total.

The purchasing and farm supply agricultural cooperatives number more than two thousand. The value of the commercial transactions of these cooperatives for the year 1950-1951 was forty-five billion francs. They provide their members with all the products and equipment necessary and distributed (in 1949-1950) four hundred fifty thousand tons of fertilizers among their members.

According to the general agricultural census carried out in 1955, out of two million two hundred sixty thousand one hundred and fifty agricultural entrepreneurs, one million one hundred eighteen thousand one hundred and eighty five were members of cooperatives, that is, 49.5 percent of the total. This number has certainly increased since then, and must have surpassed fifty percent. Among the departments where peasant cooperatives are most abundant, we shall cite L'Oise (88.5 percent), L'Aube (75.09 percent), Loiret (76.6 percent), Deux-Sevres (83.5 percent), Marne (76.6 percent), L'Yonne (77.8 percent), Bas-Rhin and Meuse (76.6 percent), Haute-Marne (76 percent). But certain other departments are still relatively untouched by this phenomenon, such as Lozère (7.6 percent), Hautes-Pyrénées (17.3 percent), Morbihan (19.3 percent), and Manche (20.3 percent).

No matter how you look at it this is already a magnificent result that shows that one out of every two French peasants is a member of a cooperative. Now let us suppose that cooperative centers are established in all the municipalities of France. And let us even assume that every individual landowner joins the cooperative institutions of his town, and that these cooperatives form specialized networks or further develop those that already exist, so that the centers for obtaining provisions in the cities can direct their requests to these networks to acquire, in exchange for industrial products or for a quantity of recognized symbolic money, the agricultural products needed by the consumers.

This would be a method of collectivized distribution among producers and between producers and consumers that would eliminate middlemen and also make possible the coexistence of the two systems, the collectivist and the individualist, whose common denominator would be the non-exploitation of man by man. We would thus find ourselves amidst a very imperfect socialism, if we uphold the **true** meaning of the word, but one that has completely abolished capitalism and allows for an infinitely more rational management than the latter system.

Such an arrangement would also allow, in each town, and in the rural areas under each town's jurisdiction, the coexistence of two systems: complete collectivism and the semi-collectivist system. The distribution cooperatives or the specialized stores would assume responsibility for the local allocation of the products that they had obtained, by means of the established system of circulation, which is a network of connections among the various production centers, a network of the type we have already explained in the chapter on industry.

Agricultural activities will have to be coordinated in order to ensure the necessary level of production. For the most part the latter has been regulated by the traditional production of the countryside for centuries. Pertinent statistics are available in the Departmental Agricultural Chambers where the coordination committees should establish their headquarters. There, the commissions formed by the collectives of a working class character and the peasant collectives and cooperatives will be able to harmonize their efforts; these commissions will in turn give rise to interdepartmental commissions that, according to the various types of production, will divide the country into specialized zones. We have already mentioned the wheat zone. We may also cite the wine zone, whose center might be in Toulouse, and the dairy zone, whose center we may situate in Charente or Normandy. One could even foresee the establishment of various zones of greater or lesser size, composed of regional organizations that would be organized on a higher level in an inter-regional or national Federation for each sector of production.

Such a procedure would lead to a set of agricultural federations embracing the various specialties of agriculture: grains, vegetables, root crops, wine, cider, milk, edible oils and fats, meat, etc.

[Chart 3: The General Organization of Agriculture

1. Production
2. Distribution
3. Accounting
4. Reserves
5. Fertilizers
6. Equipment
7. Technology
8. Soil science][**Chart omitted**]

Each Federation will have sections corresponding to the various specializations, and all of them will be united in a General Confederation of Agriculture, just as the industries will be united in an industrial Confederation; and these two enormous branches of production, each depending on the other, will in turn unite in a higher body that will direct both. With respect to determining the contribution to be made by each agricultural region, zone and cooperative, the directive mechanism will be, for the most part, similar to the one we sketched for industry.

In agriculture as well, demand will determine the character of the products and the scale of production of the various productive sectors. Undoubtedly, for we must once again call attention to this point, at first the productive sectors will have to continue to produce more or less as they did before the transformation, in order to prevent disorder and shortages. After this initial period, they will proceed to implement modifications and the necessary adaptations.

It is futile to cultivate lands whose yields are too low, in poor districts, when the right kind of reforestation would be more beneficial to society. It is futile to “increase production” beyond the amount that can be sold, unless—which would be very logical—you were to want to help the malnourished peoples of the world, such as those in India or Africa.

Finally, a process of agricultural-industrial decentralization will be imposed that, by diversifying and complementing the activities of towns and small cities, will provide them with a more modern, more pleasant and qualitatively more satisfying way of life. This will lead to a process of integration that will serve as a counterweight to the sprawling industrial concentrations and would establish a useful equilibrium between the various towns and cities. It would undoubtedly be salutary for some of the inhabitants of the rural areas to move to the city, when the countryside is overpopulated and the city needs labor power for activities that are useful to all. When, however, this exodus from the country serves to multiply the number of bureaucrats, national and local police forces, and diverse forms of parasitism, but is encouraged for the ostensible purpose of giving employment to surplus labor power, or when it leads to the proliferation of middlemen, added to the ones that already exist, then it would be better for these men to stay in the countryside, to assist those who have not abandoned their plows or their tractors. And to help modernize the way of life of the countryside, even with regard to its industrial aspect.

The most important thing is to implement justice. This, so that men will no longer have to fight one another for the various means of existence; so that there will no longer be either exploited or exploiters, ruled or rulers, poor or rich; so that all shall be equally happy, insofar as this happiness involves the objective conditions of existence, thanks to their labor and their solidarity, their morality and their loyalty.

The best means to achieve such a result is, in our opinion, the commune, of which the Spanish Revolution has provided the model, and which is found in the *Kibbutzim* of Palestine, or in certain Mexican “ejidos”.¹⁰ We admit, however, that this goal cannot be fully realized, all at once, especially in a country like France. Even more importantly, we understand that the peasants will hesitate to abandon their usual way of life which, although imperfectly, has provided them with the means of existence, and instead fully implement our ideas in practice. Immediate measures should, therefore, be partial in one place, and total in another. Everything depends on the people and the various opportunities provided by each situation. But in this respect as in respect to all other questions, we must always strive to achieve as much as possible, regardless of how long it takes to reach our goal.

The lessons learned from cooperation are of great educational value. They show the peasants that, by practicing mutual aid and solidarity, each person is sure to benefit.

Without the common use of resources, which, isolated, only yield poverty, how many machines would not be purchased, or work, how many lands would not be fertilized, how many techniques would not be applied! The productivity of agricultural countries like Denmark and Holland would fall by fifty percent, with the disastrous repercussions one may expect for the population of the countryside.

A good beginning has been made. It is necessary to extend it for the well being of all. We are not telling all the peasants, without exception, to hold all their lands in common, and that they should renounce individual property down to the smallest garden sized plot of land. It is even humanly preferable not to abolish all their free initiative, their sense of personal responsibility, and a certain possibility of being one's own master at the place where one works. This is how the communist “ejidos” of Mexico operated.

We may therefore expect, lacking a more general movement, mixed results.

Why, in one or another town, should not one fourth, one third or one half of the land be held in common to produce wheat, grapes, beets, or products of intensive industrialized agriculture?

This would result in a real reduction of effort, and the reduction in the exhaustion of the workers would be a much more valuable outcome. And maybe in this manner the way will be cleared towards increasing equality and the practice of fraternity in human relations.

Above all, however, it is the small-scale cultivators who will be most interested in these collective enterprises. Modern agriculture has been almost completely transformed into industrial agriculture, so that it requires diverse technical means, knowledge and equipment. It also requires very strict accounting. The only resource upon which the small-scale cultivators can fall back upon, in the face of their growing difficulties, is the struggle to raise prices or obtain subsidies from the state—or, more precisely, from us, the taxpayers.

If they were to work in common, however, their overhead costs will be reduced, and they will earn more, in every aspect of their activities. Collective labor is always more profitable if it is organized as it should be. Given equal natural conditions, the capitalism of big business has always defeated small private enterprise because it collected in one workplace a large number of workers who were assigned to carefully chosen jobs. This was, in industry, the first form of collective labor. Unfortunately, the capitalists pocketed the profits. This time it is the workers who will be the beneficiaries.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services play a major, and constantly expanding, role in the life of civilized nations. One need only consider the scale of the entire educational establishment (primary, secondary, and higher technical instruction), sanitation and health care, public welfare, railroads, and highways, to get an idea of how large a role they play. So, all of these services are performed and must not cease to be performed. How should we approach the problem of replacing their current forms of administration and direction with a new kind of administrative and directive system?

Let us once again take a few examples. Today, the primary schools and all pre-school organizations are either in the hands of the state, or else in those of the municipalities. The Ministry of Public Education supplies, thanks to direct and indirect tax revenues, the money necessary for their functioning. The municipalities only provide a smaller share of their funding requirements.

The first and most important problem that will be posed during the revolutionary period is that of keeping all the members of the teaching profession at their posts.

Teachers, professors, teaching assistants, proctors, etc.; we know that all of them are paid, whether with money that comes from the state budget, or with money from the municipalities. We must also consider the private schools which, in France, go by the inaccurate name of “free” schools, most of which are financed by the Catholic Church, which obtains the money for these schools by all sorts of means.

So, first of all, the preservation of the teaching profession requires that all of its members and all auxiliary personnel must be regularly paid.

This payment will be made in accordance with the methods we have already outlined for the distribution of the “wage fund”, or “purchasing power”, to all the inhabitants of the country. The professors, teachers, assistants, etc., will be paid during the first stage of the revolution by what will remain of the state apparatus, which will have to be used at least provisionally.

It is true that a social revolution entails, among its most immediate consequences, the non-payment of taxes. This financial problem can only be resolved by the monetary currency issued by the revolution, and by the issue of “fiat money”, so often practiced in capitalist society. This enforced channeling of money will be applied thanks to official and compulsory prices for commodities.

Paper money will therefore have value, because this value will be backed up by the goods produced by society.

The organization of education will be, above all, the work of the professors and teachers. There are numerous teachers associations. The Ministry of Public Education also possesses all, or almost all, the statistics and data necessary to coordinate both secondary as well as higher education. On the other hand, more than half the technical education in France is carried out in private institutions, which proves that it is by no means necessary to call upon the state to organize it.¹¹ The same thing is true with regard to twenty percent of the primary schools, currently in the hands of the Catholic Church, which shows us that it is possible to organize this kind of education, as well, without the state.

This fact was also proved, prior to the French Revolution, when the lower clergy organized the primary schools.

Now, the National Trade Union of Teachers, and the powerful National Federation of Education, which has two hundred thirty thousand members in the teaching profession, constitute, throughout the country, a more than sufficient framework to assure the continued functioning of all the schools, and especially as a means to coordinate this continued functioning. Here, once again with regard to practical organization, a fundamental problem is posed, that of decentralization. In France there are thirty-eight thousand municipalities, of which thirty-seven thousand five hundred have less than ten thousand inhabitants.

Even if it takes place within the framework of a certain accepted general plan, to the extent that such a plan is necessary, the organization of the schools can and must be decentralized, in accordance with local and regional needs.

This will be all the more easily accomplished once education no longer relies on the state budget. Above all, this is why it had allowed itself to be placed under government control in the first place. The municipalities often do not possess, and were even less likely to do so in the past, the means to pay for the construction of schools, teachers' salaries, and the purchase and replacement of teaching materials. The state took their place. It also did so when the local initiative was lacking, as was so often the case. Today, the initiative is not lacking. And it will be even less likely to be lacking when the revolution takes place, because revolutions have always been preoccupied with the development of education.

The teachers having been paid, the books having been supplied by the presses of the Printers Federation, the equipment having been supplied by the specialized workshops, linked by their respective federations, the latter will organize the operation of the schools throughout the land, with the participation of the teachers, the municipal delegates, the representatives of the parents and the former students. In the big cities, this system could be administered on a neighborhood scale. Education will therefore be transformed into a real public service.

As for the universities, we must first recall that, for many centuries, in France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Bohemia, Spain, England, the Netherlands, etc., they were founded and operated as private enterprises, and that their incorporation into the state apparatus is a relatively recent phenomenon. Currently, in the United States, more than half of the universities are funded and operated by private enterprise, compete with the state universities and show that it is possible to maintain and develop institutions of higher learning without the state, institutions that society and humanity needs so badly.

Let us now consider hospital services, with reference to the question of public health. We shall first of all point out that, in countries like Russia—which we refer to without taking as a model—and England, health care is nationalized. This trend towards nationalization is constantly expanding, since it has been understood, due to the development of civilization, that health is an individual right and a collective duty, and that it must be guaranteed by a collective organization, one that is as coordinated as effectively as possible.

On the one hand, this impulse can come from above, from a Health Care Federation, for example, that includes doctors, professors, bacteriologists, radiologists, specialists of all kinds and various categories of paraprofessionals. Each specialty could constitute a section, just as in the industrial federations each trade

constitutes its own section and the Federation embraces the entire territory and the whole population in order to effectively allocate the respective services and respond to general needs, with the greatest possible economy.

For example, the construction of more sanitaria than the country needs should be prevented; and in every city, it will be necessary to organize the various requisite clinics, equitably distributing them throughout the city, but no more than are necessary.

The network of hospitals and miscellaneous health care facilities must also respond to an indispensable process of planning, which will rule out improvisation and isolated initiatives.

Nor will this coordination be a form of centralization. Here as well we will have to decentralize, as much as possible. Health care, and the hospital services, must be, to a great extent, organized, controlled and directed by local initiative. They already are. They could be much more decentralized. First, because their reason for existence is to safeguard the public health, drinking water, domestic hygiene, the sewage system, and general cleanliness. Secondly, because it is with reference to the local living conditions that the public health services must be organized. Vaccines could be shipped from Paris from the Pasteur Institute. It is impossible to foresee what measures will be imposed, depending on how polluted the local water supply is, the heredity of the inhabitants, or the accidental emergence of one or another focal point of infectious disease. And even with regard to the treatment of epidemics, which must be very strictly coordinated, the practical measures to be applied have a purely local character.

An overall plan and decentralization can therefore go perfectly hand in hand and can be fused together in federalist planning. This recalls the public health organization that the Spanish libertarian revolution—in which municipally based public education spread everywhere—had begun to construct. In the Spanish Revolution, small hospitals or clinics were prudently distributed throughout the countryside, so that each one served a certain number of small villages, and none of the latter were without the necessary means to care for the sick, even in the most isolated hamlets. In addition to doctors, to whom very strictly demarcated sectors were assigned, these institutions assured the provision of necessary treatments for those patients who were transported to them in vehicles from the local collectives.

At the next level there is the cantonal (a political-geographical term) hospital. Each Canton will have its own hospital, which will be better organized and larger than the institutions at the first level, possessing technical equipment and often the most highly skilled specialists, doctors and surgeons. When a “Canton” has too many towns, naturally, two such hospitals will be built.

Finally, each provincial capital will contain, depending on its size, one or more hospitals where not only the local patients will be treated, but also those who require special care from a leading doctor or an outstanding surgeon.

In France there is an organization that is in part comparable to our conception, but only in part. It is far from embracing the entire population. It was in Spain, above all, that this activity was socialized, without the state, and in its entirety formed a solidaric whole, from the illustrious professor to the most humble invalid, along with the midwives and the dentists. A great deal is therefore possible with regard to this question. It would be sufficient for the members of the medical professions to agree to participate in such an enterprise and, faithful to their mission and to the Hippocratic oath, put their social and human mission above all other considerations. Those who are not profiteers will then see that this mission can be much more effectively pursued in a society that is completely organized for the good of its members, than in a society where the defense of health is only assured to people in accordance with the amount of money they have.

If we consider the railroads, they have already been fully organized, and we need only assure this organization’s continuity and functioning. Certain modifications will undoubtedly be necessary, but this will not pose serious problems like those of the industries that need raw materials, often on a daily basis, which come from distant regions, and which must ship their finished products to all the geographical regions of the country.

The problem that will have to be addressed is that of the coordination of the means of transportation, particularly the coordination of the railroads, the highways, the river and canal networks and aviation.

In capitalist society, these elements not only compete with one another, but also duplicate services, with a senseless waste of human effort, materials and energy. It is imperative that these four means of transportation should be rationally organized in accordance with the needs of the travelers and the shipping requirements for commodities, so that they complement one another. Today, the canal system, which plays an enormous role in the economy of the north of France, is neglected by the state, in favor of the railroads, because the latter have been nationalized, and the business of the state is, above all, to feather its own nest. In the future transformation, the measures that will be implemented will be determined in accordance with necessities that will emerge from careful studies.

As of this moment, however, we can see that the necessary scheduling implies a centralized organization of the federative type. It is not the base, it is not each rail station, each rail hub, that must direct the organization of the trains, the transport priorities and the freight schedules.

Likewise, river and canal navigation as well, determined by the commodities that must be transported and sent to various destinations, depending on the needs of the country's economy, require a general managerial center, based on the data that comes from the base—and we may, in this respect, speak of a federalist centralism.

Motorized transport, which has acquired such importance, will have more autonomy. The range of trucks is often local or relatively short, as is that of buses. In these cases, the scheduling will often be locally determined, but will also be indispensable, and will naturally be imposed as well, on urban transport. Railroads, river and canal navigation, highway transportation, and aviation show us how four parallel and complementary activities form a single whole that, united in a general Federation of transport, will coordinate their efforts in conformance with the general interest of the entire population.

[Chart 4. The Organization of the National Economy.]

General Confederation of the Economy

Confederation of Agriculture

Federal Committees of Agriculture

Confederation of Industry

Federal Committees of Industry

Public Services

Transport

Health

Education][Chart omitted]

MAINTAINING PRODUCTIVITY

It is particularly at the industrial workers that the following verities are directed. We are aware of the fact that they were not first enunciated by a revolutionary, and that we run the risk, by publishing these words, of being misunderstood and condemned. But every responsible man does his duty, regardless of the incomprehension with which he may be met. It is better to be stoned by the mob than to lie.

For the immense majority, if not all, of the revolutionary workers, the expropriation of the employers and the capitalists must entail an immediate and major improvement of their condition. Based on what they have been told about the critique of capitalism, they have deduced that the owners, the stockholders and other exploiters, direct or indirect, pocket half if not more of the value of production. Therefore—they think—it would be possible, without any harm, once the factories and workshops have been occupied, to reduce the working hours by a similar proportion. Economic life would still be assured of continuing.

Such a belief and the attitude that derives from it would rapidly lead the revolution to bankruptcy. A superficial or militant critique of capitalism falsifies the problems that we face and, as a result, also falsifies the necessary solutions.

In the first place, in economics, it is not the distribution of monetary symbols, or of financial resources, that is the most important aspect, but the importance, in terms of quantity and quality, of the products, goods and services placed at the disposal of society. Whether the economy is capitalist or socialist, if it consumes eighty-five million quintals of wheat per year, it will be necessary to continue to supply the population with eighty-five million quintals of wheat.¹² If nineteen million tons of steel are produced we will also have to continue to supply the same amount each year. If, let us assume, that each year, one hundred million pairs of shoes are manufactured, or an average of three hundred thousand homes are built, this rate will have to be maintained. To reduce it to half, or a quarter or a third of its former amount would be to condemn the population to unendurable privations.

It is patently obvious. Far from relaxing their efforts, most workers in industry will have to, as soon as possible, tend to increase them, since whereas the privileged, having become ordinary citizens, will consume less after a revolution, a much larger number of people will consume more. Among the masses of badly paid wage workers and the peasants who live in poverty in the regions that are not favored by nature, millions of people, men, women and children, will logically want to raise their standard of living. Therefore, generally, and for quite a long period of time, there will be no question of reducing labor time, or of placing limitations on each person's working time, after the revolution.

We think it is necessary to support this claim with various proofs. The Annual Statistical Abstract of France, in its 1957 edition, provides a chart showing the distribution of the national income. In this chart the main categories which are of special interest to us, were the following (as measured in 1957 francs):

Wage workers 8,460,000,000.00

Profits of farmers and other individual enterprises 4,033,000,000.00

Profits from capital investments 674,000,000.00

Non-distributed corporate profits 958,000,000.00

Let us suppose, **which is far from being true**, that all the profits from investments can be classified in the net profits of capitalist corporations, and that the non-distributed profits are not employed to improve the technical side of the labor process (replacement of machinery, new buildings, etc.), we would have a total of one billion six hundred thirty-two billion francs of capitalist profits and eight billion four hundred sixty billion in direct and indirect wages. Thus, calculated in monetary terms, and reckoning on the basis of the total capitalist profit, the latter is less than one fifth of the total income of the wage workers.

It is true that two million of the latter are paid by the state. This does not prevent us from falling far short of the fifty percent pocketed by capital, which so many workers imagine to be the case.

In reality, a return of five, six or seven percent on capital invested is normal. Ten percent is very good business. Fifteen percent is exceptional. If we calculate, as has all too often been done, in accordance with the financial distribution, this means that where there is a profit rate of—let us suppose—seven percent, one hour less work per day, which out of a day of eight hours would represent a 12.5 percent reduction of labor time, this would already imply a serious economic deficit. If we were to add a reduction in labor intensity of ten or twenty percent, this would soon lead to catastrophe. Not to speak of fifty percent....

The sums obtained in the form of profit by capitalism are enormous, above all, because they are distributed among a minority of people. Were these profits to be distributed among the masses of the wage workers, they would be minuscule. The Renault management has distributed, for the year 1958, one billion francs in profits to its workers and employees. Had this sum been divided between a hundred major stockholders, it would have amounted to ten million francs for each stockholder. Distributed among sixty thousand workers, this number is reduced to sixteen thousand six hundred sixty six francs for each worker.¹³ It is clear that, in such conditions, all that is needed is a slight drop in production for even a capitalist enterprise to prevail over a non-capitalist enterprise.

The author of these lines has worked at a press where the monthly profits were, on average—in the year 1955—seventy thousand francs per wage worker. The owner of the press has two luxury cars and chalets. The general feeling among the workers was that, if his profits were to be distributed among the workers, their situation would be much improved. I made the following calculation: let us assume that the owner makes one million francs per month in profit, that is, twelve million per year, and that these twelve millions were to be shared out among the three hundred twenty wage workers of the press. This would mean that each worker would receive an extra thirty-seven thousand francs per year. Even if this amount is doubled—and we were to assume that the owner makes two million francs per month—this would not make very much difference with regard to the situation. The capitalist “profit”, which has become the monstrous target of our attacks, is therefore not the main reason for our struggle against the capitalist system, which involves a complete conception of social organization and its methods, and this goes far beyond merely re-distributing the capitalist profit.

We shall add one more demonstration. Currently, in every capitalist country, when the government, fearing a crisis of overproduction, wants to retard or prevent this phenomenon, it raises the interest rate on money. If the banks loan money to other businesses at a three or four percent interest rate, all the government has to do is impose a five or six percent interest rate—or often, even lower rates—in order to cause numerous businesses to stop borrowing, investing and expanding their production.

This means that a reduction of profits on the order of one, two, or three percent is normally sufficient in France, England, the Scandinavian countries, the United States, Germany, and Italy, to halt industrial expansion.

All of these facts thus confirm that a marginal deficit of ten percent, or more precisely, a fall of ten percent in profits, would engender a shortage of products, or of services, together with the harmful consequences that can be expected. It is therefore false, the worst falsehood, to maintain that labor time, or labor intensity can be reduced without harm. What is more, the number of producers should be increased, by introducing into the production process men who had previously not been producers. But anyone who is really acquainted with work knows that we cannot entrust, all at once and without any training, machinery to people who are not accustomed to using it. Furthermore, it is by no means certain—and this is why we examine intermediate solutions—that we can, once and for all, and at one stroke, eliminate all parasites and parasitism.

Let us engage in one last reflection that will allow us, we believe, to obtain a better understanding of the importance of this question. Those who have followed the progress of the partial attempts at emancipation carried out by enterprising elements of the proletariat are not unaware of the fact that numerous communities and numerous production cooperatives have failed. All kinds of explanations have been offered to account for this fact, and it is undoubtedly the case that all of them were at least partially valid. But the point we just discussed has always, or almost always, been forgotten: the impact of the belief that it was possible to reduce the expenditure of labor in production, without any risk of incurring a deficit. So it may have been possible, once the project was operational, to reduce the labor time by ten percent. But not twenty, not even fifteen; for in that case, you would not be able to compete with the capitalist enterprises.

Quite often the attitude of the participants was: if it was necessary to work as much in a cooperative as in the boss's workshop, they had the impression that they worked **more** in the cooperative, precisely due to the contrast between their expectations and reality.

Any serious preparation for running the economy must take these facts, whose importance is essential, into account. The revolution is not justified solely by the suppression of the capitalist profit, as we said above. It is not even justified solely by the abolition of the exploitation of man by man. The origins of economic waste and inefficiency, which weigh so heavily on our lives and chain us to a futile servitude, are innumerable. Just the standing armies and bureaucracies of the states are worth more than capitalism itself. A large number of luxury industries, invented by the privileged, and by the *snobbery* of the leisured classes, who do not know what to do with their money, a multitude of new “needs” wholly created by artificial means, all these factors deprive production of what it needs: capital, work and workers, energy, and raw materials, which could be used to raise the standard of living of so many workers and peasants.

To take only the costs of advertising, incurred to convince people to buy something that they quite often do not need: these costs have risen, in France, in the year 1958, to one hundred fifteen billion francs; in 1959, in England, advertising costs amounted to three hundred eighty-four billion francs, and four trillion three hundred seventy-five billion francs in the United States. If all this wasted money, or what it represents in economic value, had been employed to assist the underdeveloped countries, how many lives would have been saved! But it is the fatal law of the capitalist system to produce and to squander without pause.

Why do we need to construct luxury cars or luxury furniture? A few car models should suffice, and comfortable furniture will be much more abundant if the satisfaction of the needs of all is made the first priority.

Labor power, raw materials, and energy are squandered for artificial needs that also distort customs, even those of the proletarians as their standard of living is rising. And consider also all the extras that are inherent in this society: the theft practiced in trade and by middlemen (who are much too numerous, as we pointed out above), and parasitic professions of every type: all of these things taken as a whole, are what has to disappear, it is all of this that we must attack. But before we establish a real social order, and while these necessary transformations are taking place, the rate of productivity must be maintained, under penalty of failure and a return to the exploitation of man by man, and to the ruinous disorder of capitalism and the state.

THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

What we have presented in this book may seem, in part, utopian, because these conceptions of practical implementation refer, or seem to refer, to an indistinct future. But this future will never be realized if we do not prepare for it right now, since problems of such importance cannot be solved with improvised methods. The occupation of the factories in Italy, in 1922, and the occupation of the factories throughout much of France in June 1936, show us that we might, regardless of the exact date, once again encounter a revolutionary situation in which it will be necessary to understand what must be done quickly to achieve a positive result.

However, even while we are waiting for such a situation—which we must help to prepare for by means of incessant study—to arise once again, why not immediately engage in some kind of initiative that could serve as a milestone along the road to the future? Why do the small-scale farmers not organize, in one or another part of France, into labor collectives, even on a limited scale? What prevents the formation of production cooperatives, utilizing all the raw materials of local origin, employed for the production of certain industrial products? Why should agricultural improvements, whose benefits would be shared, not be undertaken?

Let us assume that one hundred farmers unite in order to pursue their specialty in common. As the Spanish experience has shown, it would be easy to guarantee to the twenty-five or thirty farmers who can or preserve their vegetables or fruits that the supply cooperatives have to buy their products. The peasant cooperative community thus spreads to another domain, and by this means acquires access to much more abundant resources. And it is the life of each person, of each household, which will be improved and embellished.

Is it not possible, as well, to immediately proceed to implement projects involving aviculture and animal husbandry? And while we are waiting for this stage, is it not possible, even though each small dairy farmer or peasant preserves the ownership of his cattle, to concentrate the animals in common stables, to graze them in commonly owned pastures (just as they graze sheep and goats in common in certain mountainous

regions), and to milk them all together using milking machines? This, naturally, would only apply to those situations where the cows can be concentrated in this manner, as in certain regions of France. Why not extend, as far as possible, the practices of the “fruteriers” of the Jura and part of the Northern Alps?

The possibilities for immediate extension into the field of action of the cooperatives are demonstrated by the Swedish experience, where this mode of organization, which began with very sparse resources, but often characterized by great devotion, underwent prodigious development. In 1954, in a nation of seven million inhabitants, the general center of cooperatives had one million eight hundred thousand seven hundred and three members.¹⁴ Gross receipts have risen to two billion four hundred forty-four million kronas. Sales have risen to one billion five hundred and six million kronas, of which, eight hundred million kronas were paid for commodities produced by the cooperatives that are members of the General Center. The workshops and factories of the cooperatives supply twenty-eight percent of the margarine produced in Sweden; ninety percent of the edible oils; twenty-two percent of the wheat flour; twenty-six percent of the oatmeal; thirty percent of the pasta; fifty percent of the electric light bulbs; and eight percent of the plywood.

And these are only a few aspects of the activities of the Swedish cooperatives which, just like the French agricultural cooperatives, have made a powerful contribution to the task of cleaning up commercial practices and improving the quality of merchandise. It is therefore evident that immense opportunities are available, but only on the condition that the members behave like real cooperators, and that they actively participate in the management of their organizations, that they do not, from negligence or indolence, leave all the administrative work that has to be done in the hands of the same people. Otherwise the organizers and administrators are transformed into rulers who cannot be replaced, and the cooperative strays from the path of the purposes for which it was created; and this is the fault of all. In the final accounting, it is always a matter of the qualities—or the defects—of men.

It cannot be denied that such distortions are quite likely to occur in capitalist society. After the social transformation, for which the cooperative movement must prepare, they will be less formidable. We say “**less formidable**”, rather than “**harmless**”. In order to avoid them, local, and even more importantly, small cooperatives, will always be preferable, since such a scale would be appropriate for the cooperative environment. It is in the large institutions that bureaucratic centralization is most likely to emerge. In this case, as well, the federalism that entails the best context for self-management and self-administration is the most appropriate—libertarian—rule.

Are these goals that we are trying to impress upon the cooperatives and the cooperators the expression of an extremism that contradicts true cooperation? Not at all. We need only refer to the first paragraphs of the declaration of the Rochdale Community, whose members were the pioneers and true founders of the cooperative movement, concerning whom there is much talk but whose words are all-too-often forgotten, to prove this.

What did those twenty-eight weavers proclaim, who have always been viewed as the founding fathers of modern cooperation?¹⁵

“The objects and plans of this Society are to form arrangements for the pecuniary benefit and the improvement of the social and domestic conditions of its members, by raising a sufficient amount of capital in shares of one pound each, to bring into operation the following plans and arrangements.

“The establishment of a store for the sale of provisions and clothing etc.

“The building, purchasing, or erecting of a number of houses, in which those members desiring to assist each other in improving their domestic and social condition may reside.

“To commence, the manufacture of such articles as the society may determine upon, for the employment of such members as may be without employment, or who may be badly remunerated.

“That as soon as practicable, this society shall proceed to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education, and government, or in other words to establish a selfsupporting home-colony of united interests, or assist other societies in establishing such colonies.”

[Excerpt from the “Laws and Objectives of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers”, Rochdale, 1844; see, online: <http://www.cooperativegrocer.coop/articles/2004-01-09/co-op-principles-then-and-now-part-2> - English translator’s note.]

We could discuss at length the Danish cooperatives, or those of Germany and the United States (four million members out of seven million farmers, in 1947), or of England (eleven million seven hundred fifty thousand members in the consumers cooperatives, in 1956), or other countries. None of them have taken the decisive step that was taken in Spain between 1936 and 1939, in Palestine, and in certain Mexican agrarian cooperatives. In our time, the cooperatives of the French farmers have not made so much progress. With a little more boldness, they could accomplish much to improve their standard of living. The experience of the “Comunitá” Movement, at Ivrea, in northern Italy, shows, once again, that it is possible to do much more, within the current form of society, than is attempted by those who only love their ideal in a theoretical way, or are afraid of the responsibility that they might have to assume. This movement was created at the initiative of a capitalist reformer, Olivetti, whose office machines are famous throughout the world. This reformer, similar in some respects to Robert Owen, has partially socialized his factory, and is in the process of carrying out experiments oriented to a more extensive implementation of socialization.

This initiative, which has obtained the support of technicians who also seek to bring about social reforms, has attracted the participation of seventy-three towns, which are now engaged in the reorganization of urban and social life, and are implementing structural and social reforms, including the improvement of the natural environment and the sponsorship of culture and art, and projects that involve farming the land in common, depending on the degree of development of the inhabitants of the various towns, or of part of them. Social welfare, cultural centers, industrial workshops, cooperatives....

The range of activities is immense and the possibilities for their extension are endless. We are witnessing a distinctly libertarian phenomenon, even if it does not explicitly assume the name, since its organizers have acted, up until the present time, outside the framework of the nation state and the official world and have thus demonstrated, by means of facts, that social reforms that can serve as the foundations or points of departure for the future are immediately possible.

It is a question of initiative and will, concerning which the “communities of labor” set an example in France. The communitarian movement that is being so painstakingly constructed, in the face of the indifference of the working class masses, the trade unions and the vanguard groups, is nonetheless another example of what can be done. It is composed of twenty-seven groups of producers and has nine hundred members, who are employed in various industries. Nothing but this indifference prevents this movement from enjoying a magnificent development. In general, and this is also true of the “Comunitá” Movement, the results have been positive. They would be even more positive if those who say they want to transform society would lend their support to these immediate attempts at social transformation. On the other hand, it is essential to understand that libertarian socialism is not limited to the problems of production and distribution. It is certainly true that economic justice is its primary characteristic, and we have devoted the corresponding amount of space in this pamphlet to that problem; for it also implies a moral character of the highest value. But in order to be in a position to bring about economic justice, it is necessary for a certain degree of ethics, intellectual culture, and sociability—which the institutions of mutual aid, such as the cooperatives, enhance—to be attained.

All of these factors are linked. No person is capable of going beyond patronage and wage labor, whose mentality is not higher and more advanced than the regime embodied by those principles; nor can this be attained by anyone who has no idea of his duties, no willingness to perform them without being forced to do so, and who therefore has not reached that level of consciousness that would make him worthy of living in a better society.

Libertarian socialism is the material reorganization of society, but it is at the same time the creation of a more advanced state of personal happiness, and a living harmony of all individuals whose thoughts, hearts, and **conduct** rise to the level of the great goals we pursue.

Libertarian socialism is about making man happier, not only because he will possess more material goods, but because he will be more dignified, more free, and more supportive to his kind. This entails the replacement of the written law, which is so often asocial and anti-social, with the moral law that derives its substance and its inspiration from our hearts and our consciousness. It also implies the replacement of authoritarian institutions by fraternal practices that will create among us the necessary cohesion to organize islands within contemporary society, islands that would gradually form a new world that will expand by way of tireless efforts on behalf of the great goals that we set for ourselves.

Libertarian socialism implies a new mode of conduct for each of us, the realization of all the possibilities of beauty, kindness, rectitude and higher feelings of which man is capable.

It is a **conception of a new civilization** in the strictest sense of the word, and civilization is, above all, a practical humanism, a form of civility, a sum of behaviors, and one must fully recognize in the intellectual creations of art and thought, the superior character that is truly the hallmark of civilized peoples.

Anyone who agrees with this idea and who wants to put it into practice places himself outside the pale of contemporary society, just as the Christians placed themselves outside the Roman society of the time of Nero. And anyone whose conduct does not rise to the level of this challenge will remain in this society, even if he endorses the most subversive slogans. Numerous revolutionaries have occupied themselves with practical problems of both the present and the future, but not having given form to the new man within themselves, they are incapable of leaving this society. In such a case, even under the most favorable circumstances: socialism will never be realized.

Yes, one can and must create, starting now, a higher community that, in the domain of culture, and that of morality applied to material relations, will constitute an example of libertarian socialism, and this will necessarily comprise the basis for practical projects, as nothing more can be expected from the current circumstances. But we cannot be entirely certain that the opposite will not take place: we cannot be certain that the economic transformation will automatically engender the moral transformation, the capability to overcome the society of classes and the state.

Here we touch upon one of the problems that socialism, revolutionary syndicalism, communism, revolutionary anarchism and the school of abundance have avoided posing, because they are not of any advantage to demagogues nor do they serve the interests of the dictatorial bureaucracy and politics. But anyone who has some experience with people and has been able to learn lessons from this experience, anyone who is familiar with the history of the workers movement, the socialist and communist parties or other vanguardist currents, knows that this question is a major factor, of the greatest importance, conducive to failure.

We therefore face an immense task, and one that must begin now. It is absolutely necessary to bring our ideas and our methods to the trade unions, the cooperatives, and the various mutual aid institutions. It would be most useful, even indispensable, to become as closely acquainted as possible with the organization and functioning of contemporary society, so as to have a better idea of how to organize and operate a new one. It is also necessary, and indispensable, however, to devote serious attention to the elaboration of the significance of libertarian socialism for the other spheres of life, that aspect of the new civilization thanks to which we will be able to show people the paths towards a new life. This task must, by way of manifold expressions, saturate and penetrate all of society, profoundly and lastingly instilling the new ideas into its core.

It is therefore essential to acquire a good understanding of the overall importance of this aspect of our movement and of our life, which must awaken within us the higher consciousness of our mission. For it is often the case that those who devote their disinterested efforts to human progress are too impatient for success in their overall view of the world. This impels them to participate in political activities or activities

with short term goals, in contradiction with the fundamental postulates that they invoke. What has happened to the socialist party, revolutionary syndicalism and Marxist communism shows that such impatience has done nothing but increase the distance between these tendencies and their original goals. Once one is enmeshed in the cogs of moral and material concessions, one is dragged along by all the new situations that arise one after another, and it does not take long to be absorbed. In this manner, noble forces and great values, which could have played an immense role in the development of the peoples, have been lost to humanity.

We do not disdain any short-term gains, as long as they are not disconnected from our proclaimed goals or from the roads that lead to those goals. Life is such that, on an individual level, we may be forced to make concessions, but it is one thing to be forced to compromise, and another to willingly abandon one's principles by deliberately departing from what we believe to be noble, just and true.

There is something much more important than the minor reformist detours, which have, one after another, gradually nullified great movements: this is the creation of a new, autonomous force that is cleansed of all compromise, which represents a higher concept of civilization and which does not compromise with regard to its ideal; and that each individual will feel that he is an integral part of this force, that each feels the mutual support of his brothers and understands the greatness of our common mission. We are contributing a reality that is new to history, and this reality, which must undergo constant development, must not be dishonored and destroyed by compromises that erode, sterilize, corrode and annihilate it.

It might take a long time to accomplish so much. Those who do not want to wait will fall into the old ways of traditional parties and movements.

Without losing sight of the problems addressed in this pamphlet, while we prepare ourselves for their solution, and establish fraternal contacts with all the libertarian socialist elements that remain faithful to their principles, and helping them, wherever they engage in struggle, as much as our resources allow, this other aspect of our mission must also nourish our enthusiasm. And this other aspect is itself sufficient to justify the constitution of our Movement, in the expectation of great practical achievements.

We must show humanity a new road that must lead it to a new destiny. To preserve it from decline, its future must be liberated from the authoritarian structures that engender oppression and stagnation, from the economy of exploitation that leads to catastrophe, and from the dominant technocratic mechanisms that would submerge it in new forms of bestiality.

Confident of our convictions and our foresight, we must unite now for the future.

Gaston Leval
1959

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Gaston Leval. *Práctica del Socialismo Libertario*, tr. Antonio Colomer Viadel, Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo, Madrid, 1994.

Originally published in Switzerland in 1959 under the title, *Pratique du Socialisme Libertaire*.

- [1](#). See the report published on July 27, 1959, by the newspaper *Le Figaro*, on the horrible efficacy of just one of the means of extermination that governments wield today: four batteries of the “Caporal” atomic missile, which, however, is the smallest atomic missile in service in the American army; it nonetheless has more explosive power than all the artillery shells used by the American forces during World War Two. Faced with facts of this kind, those who still maintain that the people can win in an armed struggle against the state demonstrate a shocking lack of contact with reality. [All footnotes are the author's.]
- [2](#). Much has been said of the Russian achievements. Besides the fact that they were only rendered possible by the deaths of millions of slaves, it is a distortion of reality to claim that these

achievements would not have been possible without the nationalization of the country. Prior to 1914, the pace of industrial development in Russia was already faster than that of Western Europe. Any serious study will provide an abundance of evidence in support of this view.

- [3.](#) It would be easy for us to describe, as so many others have done, a new society in its perfected state of operation. This would then be a work of fiction. We prefer to undertake Sociology, and grapple with difficulties in order to attempt to resolve them in accordance with the economic realities with which the real creators of history must contend.
- [4.](#) In any event, it is on the basis of the workplace that the “active and creative” freedom of each worker and each individual can be best exercised. The directives given to the management committees, the technicians, and the necessary labor coordinators, cannot proceed from today’s centralized trade unions, in most cases. This would lead to a new form of bureaucratic “parasitic superstructure”. The revolution must mobilize the will, the initiative, and the sense of responsibility of all. Each individual must in turn adapt to the needs of production in general, that is, to the needs of the population as a whole. But insofar as he is capable of influencing the organization of this production, the methods of labor and the human relations of the production process, he must be a co-participant who expresses his opinion and plays a role in the decision-making process as a whole. Otherwise, there would be no application of libertarian principles, not even simple democracy, of a trade union variety or any other.
- [5.](#) Exactly sixty-five percent of France’s steel is produced in Lorraine, twenty-two percent in the North of France, eight percent in the Center and the South, and five percent in the areas of Caen and Bayonne.
- [6.](#) The coal crisis that in 1959 wreaked havoc in Belgium and Germany was in part the result of the increasing consumption of petroleum.
- [7.](#) Federalism is not atomization. To federate is to unify. The organization from the “bottom up” that was proclaimed by Proudhon and Bakunin for the social economy has nothing to do with political provincialism. Viewed in this light, federalism leads to a voluntary centralization that is controlled by all, a centralization that can be modified in accordance with the will of all.
- [8.](#) Out of one million retail businesses, six hundred eighty thousand of them do not have any employees; one hundred ninety thousand have one employee each. In all of France there are only six hundred stores that employ one hundred employees or more. “The apparatus of distribution is too large”, all the commentators are saying. This trend reached its peak during the period of “poujadisme”, which it distorted for political reasons, but whose basic impulse still exists in a latent state.
- [9.](#) These enterprises, which are especially known for their Gruyere cheese, were formed in the 12th century.
- [10.](#) Most “ejidos” are farmed by the individual owners of the land. But these are not the wealthiest ones and it is in the others that the highest degree of prosperity is attained.
- [11.](#) Sixty percent of technical education and fifty-two percent of the technical degrees granted are provided by private enterprises which teach four hundred sixteen trades, of which one hundred twenty-seven are not taught in the public sector. Most civil, electrical and textile engineers are graduates of private technical schools.
- [12.](#) In addition to the amount that will have to be saved for seed.
- [13.](#) At four hundred francs per hour, this would imply forty-one hours of labor. If each worker were to work only eighty hours less per year, this would have enough of an effect to drive the enterprise into deficit, and we are not even taking the social wage into account.
- [14.](#) Assuming that each cooperator is a member of a family, this means that about half the population of Sweden is affected by the cooperative movement.
- [15.](#) Actually, they were inspired by the principles expounded by Robert Owen.