

# The Bears of Berne and the Bear of Saint-Petersburg

Patriotic lament for a humiliated and hopeless Switzerland

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The Russian government has judged our Federal Council well, when it dared to demand the extradition of the Russian patriot Nechayev. Everyone knows that the order has been given to all the cantonal police to seek and arrest that revolutionary, as intrepid as tireless, who, after having escaped twice from the claws of the czar, that is from death preceded by the most dreadful tortures, would probably have believed, that once having taken refuge in the Swiss republic, he would be sheltered from all the imperial brutalities.

He would be wrong. The homeland of William Tell, that hero of political murder, that we still glorify today in our federal celebrations, precisely because tradition accuses him of having killed Gessler; that republic which had not feared to confront the dangers of a war with France, to defend its right of asylum against Louis-Philippe demanding the extradition of prince Louis-Napoléon, today emperor of the French; and who, after the last Polish insurrection, had dared demand of the Austrian emperor not the arrest, but the *release* of Mr. Langiewicz, on whom it had bestowed the freedom of the city; that Helvetia formerly so independent and so proud, is governed today by a Federal Council which no longer seems to seek its except in the police and spy services that it renders to all the despots.

It inaugurated its new policy of appeasement by a striking act, the inexorable *histoire* of which will reflect the republican hospitality of the Swiss. It was the expulsion of the great Italian patriot, Mazzini, guilty of having created Italy and of having dedicated all his life, forty years of indomitable activity, in the service of humanity. To drive out Mazzini, that was to expel from the republican territory of the Swiss the very genius of liberty. it was to give a slap in the face to the very honor of our homeland.

The Federal Council did not let itself be stopped by that consideration. It is a *republican* government, it is true, but after all it is nonetheless a *government*, and every political power, whatever its denomination and external form, is animated by a natural instinctive hatred against liberty. Its daily practice leads inevitably to the necessity of restraining, diminishing and destroying, slowly or violently, according to the circumstances and times, the spontaneity of the governed masses,

and that negation of liberty extends always and everywhere as far as the political and social conditions of the milieu and the spirit of the populations permits.

What is striking about the expulsion of Mazzini by the Federal Council is that it has not even been demanded by the Italian government. It was a spontaneous act, like a sort of bouquet offered to that body by the gallantry of the federal councilors, to whom Mr. Melegari, *ci-devant* patriot and Italian refugee in that same Switzerland, but today representative of the monarchy and of the Italian *consorteria*, close to the federal government, had suggested that such a proof of good will on their part could not fail to accelerate the conclusion of the great affair of the Saint-Gotthard railway.

If ever a historian wanted to recount all public and private business which has been concluded, carried out, and resolved, on the occasion of the establishment, at once ruinous and useful, of the railroads in Europe, one would see a mountain of filth rise higher than Mont-Blanc.

The Federal Council has doubtless wanted to contribute to the raising of that mountain by lending a complaisant ear to the suggestions of Mr. Melegari. Besides, by expelling Mazzini, the Federal Council made what one calls a dead certainty [sure thing?]: it gained the good graces and earned the gratitude, always so useful, of a great neighboring monarchy, knowing well the public opinion and democratic sentiment of the Swiss were so deeply sleeping or so absorbed in minor affairs, in the small gains of each day, that they would not even notice the slap that they received full on the cheek. Alas! the Federal Council showed itself a profound expert on our dispositions and our present manners. Apart from some rare protests, the Swiss republicans have remained unshaken before such an act accomplished in their name.

This impassivity of public sentiment was an encouragement to the Federal Council, which, always eager to please the despotic powers more, asked nothing better than to persevere in the same way. It proved it only too well in the case of Princess Obolensky.

A mother who has the misfortune to be born into the Russian aristocracy and the even greater misfortune to have been given in marriage to a Russian prince—a hypocrite, on his knees before all the orthodox priests of Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, who naturally bowed down before his emperor, in the end all that is most servile in this world of official servility;—that mother wants to raise her children in liberty, in respect for labor and humanity. For that, she took up residence in Switzerland, in Vevey. Naturally that displeased the court at Saint-Petersburg a great deal. They spoke there with indignation, with anger of the democratic simplicity in which she raised her children; they were clothed like bourgeois children, no luxury either in the apartments, nor at the table; no carriage, no lackeys, two servants for the whole house, and a table always very simple.—Finally, the children were forced to study from morning to night and the teachers were asked to treat them as mere mortals.—They said that the grand duchess Marie of Leuchtenberg, sister of the emperor, and *ci-devant* friend of Princess Obolenski, could not speak of it without shedding tears of rage. The emperor himself was moved by it. Several times, he ordered Princess Obolenski to return immediately to Russia. She refused. So what did His Majesty do? He ordered Prince Obolenski, who as everyone knew, had long been separated from his wife, to assert his rights as husband and father, and to use force to bring home if not the mother, at least the children.

The Russian prince asked nothing better than to obey His Majesty. The whole fortune of the family belonged to the princess, not to him: once she was relegated to some Russian convent or else declared an émigré, uncooperative with the sacred will of His Majesty, she could be

confiscated and as natural guardian of his children, he would become their administrator. The affair was excellent. But how to execute this act of brutal violence in the midst of a free, proud people, in a canton of the Swiss Republic? he was told that there is no liberty, nor republic, nor pride, nor Swiss independence which lasts against the will of His Majesty, the Emperor of all the Russias.

Was that presumptuous? Alas, no! It was only a fair assessment of a sad truth. The emperor ordered his high chancellor of foreign affairs, Prince Gortschakoff, he order the minister representing Russia at Berne, and he ordered—but, no, we must speak politely—he recommended, he asked the Federal Council of the Helvetian Republic. the Federal Council sent Prince Obolenski, with its very urgent recommendations, to the cantonal government of Lausanne; that government sent him on, empowered with its orders, to the prefect of Vevey; and at Vevey all the republican authorities had long awaited Prince Obolenski, impatient to receive him as one must receive a Russian prince, when he comes to command in the name of his czar. All had indeed been prepared from afar through the care, undoubtedly disinterested, of the attorney Cérésole, today a member of the Federal Council.

To be fair, the lawyer Cérésole had deployed in this case a great zeal, a great energy and a tremendous skill. Thanks to him, an unheard of act of bureaucratic violence has been able to be accomplished in the midst of the republican Swiss without glare and without obstacles. Forewarned on the eve of the arrival of Prince Obolenski, the prefect, the justice of the peace and the gendarmes of Vevey, Mr. Cérésole at their head, waited one fine morning at the station for the arrival of the august convoy. They had pushed kindness to the point of preparing the carriages necessary for the projected abduction, and as soon as the prince arrived, they transported themselves en masse to the home of Princess Obolenski, poor woman did not even guess the storm that would swoop down on her.

There occurred a scene that we renounce describing. The police of Vaud, doubtless jealous to distinguish themselves in front of a Russian prince, beat back with their fists the princess who wanted to say a last goodbye to her children; Prince Obolenski, delighted, went back to Russia; Mr. Cérésole gave commands. The sick, disheartened children were taken away by the gendarmes and thrown in the carriages which carried them off.

Such was the affair of princess Obolenski. Some months before that event, which was so disastrous for the honor of our republic, the princess had consulted, it is said, several Swiss jurists, and all had responded that she had nothing to fear in that country, where the liberty of each is guaranteed by the laws, and where no authority can attempt anything against any person whether native, or foreign, without a ruling and without the prior authorization of a Swiss court. It should be this way in a country which calls itself a republic and which takes liberty seriously. However, quite the opposite has happened in the case of Mme. Obolenski. It is even told that when the princess, seeing herself assailed by this entirely Cossack invasion of republican gendarmes, commanded by Mr. Cérésole and Prince Obolenski, wished to claim the protection of Swiss justice, the attorney Cérésole responded to her with some crude banter, which the Vaudois gendarmes hastened to translate immediately into blows... and love live Swiss liberty!

The Limousin affair is a new specimen of that liberty. The imperial government of France, it is known, just concluded with our federal government an extradition treaty for misdemeanors and common crimes. It is obvious that this treaty is nothing, on the part of the government of Napoleon III, but an awful trap, and on the part of the Federal Council which has agreed to it, as

well as to the Federal Assembly which has ratified it, an act of unpardonable weakness. For, under the pretext of prosecuting common crimes, the ministers of Napoleon III could now demand the extradition of all the enemies of their master.

Revolutions are not a child's game, nor an academic debate where vanities are killed, nor a literary joust where only ink is spilled. Revolution is war, and whoever says war, says the destruction of men and things. It is doubtless unpleasant for humanity that it still has not invented a more peaceful means of progress, but up to the present every new step in history has really only be accomplished after receiving the baptism of blood. Moreover, the reaction has no cause to reproach the revolution in this regard. It has always spilled more blood than that latter. Take as proof the massacres of Paris in June 1848 and in December 1851, the savage repressions of the despotic governments of other countries, in the same period and after, without speaking of the dozens, of the hundreds of thousands of victims which are the cost of wars, the necessary consequences and like the periodic fevers of that political and social state we call the reaction.

It is thus impossible to be either a revolutionary, or a true reactionary, without committing act which, from the point of view of the criminal and civil codes, unquestionably constitute offenses or even crimes, but which from the point of view of real and serious practice, whether of the reaction, or of the revolution, appear as inevitable misfortunes.

On this account, making exceptions for the innocent makers of speeches and books, what political struggler does not fall under the attack of the extradition treaty newly concluded between France and Switzerland?

If the criminal coup of December had not succeeded, and if Prince Louis-Napoleon, accompanied by his worthy acolytes, the Mornys, the Fleurys, the Saint-Arnauds, the Baroches, the Persignys, the Pietris and so many others, had taken refuge in Switzerland, after having put the city of Paris, all of France in fire and blood, and if the victorious Republic had demanded their extradition from their sister the Helvetic Republic, would the Swiss have given them up? No, doubtless. And yet if there was ever violators of all laws, human and divine, criminals against all possible codes, they were them: a band of thieves and brigands, a dozen Robert Macaires of the elegant life, united by vice and by a common distress, ruined, doomed by reputation and debts, and who, in order to rebuild a position and a fortune, have not recoiled before one of the most awful attacks known to history. There is, in a few words, the whole truth about the coup d'état of December.

The brigands have triumphed. They reigned for eighteen years without division and without control over the most beautiful country in Europe, that Europe considered with good reason as the center of the civilized world. They have created an official France in their image. They kept almost intact the appearance of some institutions and things, but they have upset the base of it by lowering it to the level of their manners and their own spirits. All the ancient words remain. They speak, as always, of liberty, justice, dignity, right, civilization and humanity; but the sense of these words is completely transformed in their mouths, each word signifying in reality the complete opposite of what it seems to want to express: they talk of a society of bandits who, by a bloody irony, make use of the most honest expressions, to discuss the most criminal schemes and act. Isn't that still the character of imperial France today?

Is there anything more disgusting, more vile, for example, than the imperial senate, composed, in the terms of the Constitution, *of all the celebrated persons of the country*? Doesn't everyone know that it is the *maison des invalides* of all the accomplices of the crime, all tired and sated

Decembrists? Do you know anything more disgraced than the justice of the empire, that all these courts and magistrates which recognize no other duty than to support even so the imperial iniquity?

Well! It is to serve the interests of one of these *pères conscrits* of the crime of December, in it solely on the strength of a judgment pronounced by one of those courts, that the government of Napoleon III, on the back of the sucker's treaty concluded by the Swiss with him, demands today the extradition of Mme. Limousin. The official pretext, and there must always be one—hypocrisy, as says a maxim which has become a proverb, being an homage that vice enders to virtue—the official pretext taken advantage of by the French minister, to press his demand, is the conviction pronounced by the court of Bordeaux against Mme. Limousin for violation of the secrecy of correspondence.

Isn't it sublime?... The empire, that violator par excellence of all the things reputed inviolable, the government of Napoleon III pursuing a poor woman who had violated the secrecy of correspondence! As if they themselves had ever done anything else!

But what is permitted for the state is forbidden to the individual. Such is the governmental maxim. Machiavelli said it, and history, as well as the practice of all present governments show it to be correct: Crime is a necessary condition of the very existence of the state, so it establishes an exclusive monopoly on it, from which it results that the individual who dares to commit a crime is twice guilty: first, against human conscience, then and especially against the state, by assuming one of its most precious privileges.

We will not discuss the value of this fine principle, the basis of all state politics. We will ask instead if it is well proven that Mme. Limousin had violated the secrecy of correspondence? Who asserts it? An imperial court. And do you truly believe that one can put faith in a judgment pronounced by an imperial court? Yes, it will be said, every time that the court has no interest in lying. Very well, but the interest exist on this occasion, and *it is the imperial government itself which it charged with informing the federal government of the fact.*

It is in the interest of Mr. Tourangin, senator of the empire and no doubt a great aristocrat, since he sets in motion all the powers of heaven and earth, from the bishops, the French minister, and the Federal Council of our republic, to the police of Vaud, to prevent his nephew from marrying Mme. Limousin.

Under the old regime in France, when necessary to save the *honor* of an illustrious family, the minister placed at the disposal of the family a *lettre de cachet*. A royal bailiff, armed with that terrible instrument, seized the offenders: man and woman, lover and mistress, man and wife, and bury them separately in the oubliettes of the Bastille. Today, we are under the regime of official liberty, under the regime of hypocrisy. The *lettre de cachet* is called a diplomatic note, and the role of the imperial bailiff is filled by the Federal Council of the Swiss republic.

The nephew of a senator of the empire, an unworthy member of that powerful and illustrious Tourangin family, to marry Madame Limousin! What a horrible scandal! And isn't there something there something to revolt all the honest feelings in the hearts of our honest federal councilors! Moreover, are not all the senators of the world united among themselves? The service that Switzerland renders today to a senator of the Empire, France may render one day to a councilor of the Swiss state. In this way, the honor of the great families of all countries will be saved, and the misalliance, this leprosy that today devours the aristocratic world, would become impossible everywhere.

The imperial government has so little doubted the excellent sentiments that animate our republican government, that in order to accelerate its administrative action, I have frankly admitted, *we know it from a reliable source*, that in this affair, the supposed violation of the secret of the letters was the least of things, a pretext, and that it was a question of an interest with a very different importance: the very honor of the imperial senator Tourangin.

So we have seen with what energy the Federal Council and those Vaud police, who had already excited the admiration of a Russian prince, put themselves at the service of the celebrated revenges of Mr. Tourangin. It was not the fault of the always-so-*executive* authorities of the canton of Vaud, if the young couple, doubtless warned, took refuge in the canton of Fribourg, and it is not the fault of the Federal Council, if the cantonal government of Fribourg, more possessive of the dignity and independence of the Swiss than he, has not yet delivered the guilty to the imperial and senatorial condemnation.

What we admire most is the role played by certain Swiss newspapers in this shameful affair. Our so-called liberal newspapers, who have a mission to defend freedom against the encroachment of democracy, do not believe themselves obliged to defend it against the violence of despotism. They dread and curse the force from below, but they bless and call all their wishes force from above. All the manifestations of popular liberty seem detestable to them, but on the other hand they love the free deployments of power, they have the cult of authority all the same, because, coming from God or the devil, all authority, by a necessity inherent in its being, becomes the natural protector of the exclusive freedoms of the privileged world. Driven by this strange liberalism, in all the questions that agitate it, they always embrace the party of the oppressors against the oppressed.

It is thus that we have seen the *Journal de Genève*, this paladin in chief of the liberal leader at home, warmly approve the expulsion of Mazzini, laud the servile complaisance of the Federal Council and entirely Cossack brutality of the Vaud authorities in the case of Princess Obolensky; and now he is preparing to prove that Mr. Senator Tourangin and the Federal Council are right, first to require, and second to order the extradition of that poor Mrs. Limousin.

He prepares, as always, by slander. This is an excellent weapon, more certain than the chassépot, the favorite weapon of the Catholic and Protestant Jesuits. However, it appeared that Mme. Limousin pays little to slander, since this newspaper, which is always so well informed, thanks to its relationship with the police and the governments of all countries, has not been able to find a single grievance against her: Ms. Limousin is older than her husband, the nephew of Senator Tourangin!

Is this not a clear proof of great depravity? A woman being married by a younger man and without even offer the advantages of a large fortune! It is almost the corruption of a minor! And think what minor! The nephew of a senator of Napoleon III. It is obvious that this is a very immoral, very dangerous woman, and that the Swiss republic should not suffer such a monster in its bosom.

And most of our papers repeat stupidly, shamefully: "This woman does not deserve the sympathies of the public!" And what do you know of it, Gentlemen? Do you know her, have you met with her often, o writers as truthful as virtuous? Who are her accusers? The government, the diplomatic corps, a senator and a tribunal of Napoleon III, that is the quintessence of triumphant and cynical immorality. And it is by basing yourself on such testimonies, that you, republicans and representatives of a free people, throw mud on a poor woman persecuted by French despotism and by all the Cérésoles of our Federal Council! So don't you sense, o gossips without brains

and without shame, that the mud will remain on yourselves, you, the indulgers of all the powers, traitors to liberty, miserable gravediggers of the independence and dignity of our homeland.

Let us return to the affair of the Russian patriot, Nechayev.

The federal government seeks him with all the cantonal police. It has given orders to arrest him. But once arrested, what it he do to him? Does it really have the courage to deliver him to the Czar of Russia? We will give it a suggestion: Let it throw him instead into the bear pit of Bern. It will be more frank and honest, shorter, and above all more humane.

And besides, it will be a punishment that Mr. Nechayev has earned. He has had faith in Swiss hospitality, justice and liberty. He thought that since Switzerland was a republic, it could only have indignation and disgust for the policy of the czar. He took the fable of William Tell seriously, he let himself be deceived by the republican pride of the speeches we pronounce during our federal and cantonal holidays, and he did not understand, the imprudent young man, that we are an entirely bourgeois republic and it is in the nature of the current bourgeoisie to love the beautiful things in the past, and to worship only lucrative and useful things in the present.

The republican virtues too costly. The practice of independence and national pride, taken seriously, can become very dangerous. Servile complacency with regard to the great despotic power is infinitely more profitable. Moreover, the major powers have a way of acting that is impossible to resist. If you do not obey them, they threaten you, and their threats are serious. Hell! Each of them has more than half a million soldiers to crush us. But if you yield a little and give proof of a bit of good will, they will lavish the most tender compliments on you, and better than compliments... thanks to the financial systems that are ruining their peoples, the great powers are very rich. The police of the canton of Vaud know something of it and the purse of Prince Obolensky too.

Caught in this dilemma, the Federal Council could not hesitate. Its utilitarian and prudent patriotism resolved it for the policy of appeasement. What, besides has this Mr. Nechayev done! Did he go, just to please him, to face the wrath of the Czar and attract on poor little Switzerland the vengeance of the Emperor of all the Russias? It can not hesitate between this unknown young man and the most powerful monarch in the world! It does not have to judge between them. It is enough that the monarch demanded his head; it must deliver it. Moreover, it is clear that Nechayev is a great culprit. Didn't he rebel against his lawful sovereign, and did he not confess in his letter that he is a revolutionary?

The Federal Council, after all, is a government. As such, it must have a natural sympathy for every government, whatever its form, and just as natural a hatred for the revolutionaries of all countries. If it held only to that, it would have very quickly swept the Swiss territory of all those adventurers who unfortunately fill it today. But there is one serious obstacle, it is the still living sentiment of Swiss dignity, the great historical traditions and the natural, deep sympathies of our republican people for the heroes and martyrs of liberty. There is finally the Swiss law that offers a generous hospitality to all political refugees and protects them against the persecutions of the despots.

The Federal Council does not yet feel strong enough to break that obstacle, but it knows how to skillfully turn it; and extradition treaties for crimes and common offenses, which almost all the Governments of Europe hastened to finalize among themselves, in preparation for an upcoming international war of reaction against the revolution, offer it a magnificent means of doing it. first it slanders, then it clamps down. It pretends to give credence to lying accusations raised against a political émigré by a government that has never done anything but lie; then it declares to the

republican public of Switzerland that this individual is wanted, not for any political crime, but for common crimes. This is how Mr. Nechayev became a murderer and a forger.

Who affirms it? the Russian government. And our dear and honest Federal Council has such faith in all the affirmations of the Russian government that it does not even ask for legal proofs, its word alone suffices. Moreover, it knows very well that if legal proofs became necessary, the Czar would only have to make a sign, for the Russian courts to pronounce against the unfortunate Nechayev the most impossible accusations and. So it has wished to spare the government of the Czar that useless trouble, and contenting itself with his simple word, it has ordered the arrest of the Russian patriot, as a murderer and maker of counterfeit bank notes.

These unfortunate Russian bank notes have served as a pretext to make domiciliary visits to the homes of several émigrés in Geneva. We know that they did not find the shadow of a bank note. But they have doubtless hoped to get their hands on some political correspondence that would necessarily compromise a lot of people, both in Russia and Poland, and which would unveil the revolutionary plans of this terrible Nechayev. They have found nothing and covered themselves with shame, that is all. But what seek with this extra-republican zeal the traces of a correspondence, some papers and letters that could in no way interest the Swiss republic? Do they want to enrich the library of the Federal Council? It is improbable, so it was to deliver them to the curiosity of the Russian government; from which it clearly results that the cantonal police of Geneva, following the example given by the police of Vaud and obeying the orders of the Federal Council itself, is transformed into the police force of the czar of all the Russias.

One even claims that Mr. Camperio, the spiritual statesman of Geneva, washed his hands of it like Pilate. He was in despair at having to fulfill some functions that disgusted him, but he had to obey the precise orders of the Federal Council. I ask myself if Mr. James Fazy, also a man of wit and the greatest revolutionary, as everyone knows, would have acted, or could have acted differently in his place? I am convinced that the answer is no. After having been one of the principal promoters of the system of political centralization, that, since 1848, subordinated the autonomy of the cantons to the power of the Federal Council, how could he escape from the consequences of that system? It would have been enough for the Federal Council to order it, in order for him, like Mr. Camperio, to fulfill *nolens volens* the office of the Russian policeman.

Such then is the clearest result of our great conquest of 1848. That political centralization that the radical party created in the name of liberty, kills liberty. It is enough that the Federal Council let itself be intimidated or corrupted by a foreign power, in order for all the cantons to betray liberty. It is enough that the Federal Council orders it, in order for all the cantonal authorities to transform themselves into a police force for the despots. Hence it follows that the former regime of autonomy for the cantons guaranteed the liberty and national independence of Switzerland much better than does the current system.

If liberty has made notable progress in several cantons that were once very reactionary, it is not at all thanks to the new powers with which the Constitution of 1848 invested the federal authorities; it is entirely thanks to the development of minds, thanks to the march of time. All the progress accomplished since 1848 in the federal domain is progress in the economic order, like the unification of currencies, weights, and measures, the great public works, the trade treaties, etc.

It will be said that economic centralization can only be obtained by political centralization, that one implies the other, that they are both necessary and beneficial in the same degree. Not at all. Economic centralization, essential, condition of civilization, created liberty; but political



centralization kills it, by destroying, for the profit of the ruler and the governing classes, the proper life and spontaneous action of the populations. The concentration of political powers can only produce slavery, for liberty and power exclude one another in an absolute manner. Every government, even the most democratic, is a natural enemy of liberty, and the stronger and more concentrated it is, the more oppressive it becomes. These are moreover truths so simple, so clear, that we are almost ashamed to repeat them.

If the cantons of Switzerland were still autonomous, the Federal Council would have neither the right, nor the power to transform them into police for foreign powers. There were doubtless some very reactionary cantons. And don't they exist today? Aren't there cantons where they condemn to the lash people who dare deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, without the federal power involving itself? But there were besides these reactionary cantons, other cantons largely infused with the spirit of liberty, of which the Federal Council could no longer arrest the progressive impetus. These cantons, far from being paralyzed by the reactionary cantons, would end by dragging them with them. For liberty is contagious and liberty alone,—not the governments,—created liberty.

Modern society is so convinced of this truth: *that all political power, whatever its origin and form, inevitably tend to despotism*,—that in all the countries where it has been able to emancipate itself somewhat, it has hastened to subject the governments, even when they are the issue of revolution and popular election, to as strict a control as possible. It has put all the safety of liberty in the real and serious organization of the control exerted by opinion and by the will of the people over all the men invested with the public force. In all the countries enjoying representative government, and Switzerland is one of them, liberty can thus only be real which this control is real. On the contrary, if the control is fictive, the liberty of the people inevitably also becomes a pure fiction.

It would be easy to demonstrate that in no part of Europe is the popular control real. We will limit ourselves this time to examining its application in Switzerland. First because it remains closest to us, and then, because being the sole democratic republic in Europe today, it has realized to some extent the ideal of popular sovereignty, so that what is true for it, must be, for even greater reasons, true for all the other countries.

The most advanced cantons in Switzerland have sought, around the era of 1830, the guarantee of liberty in universal suffrage. It was a movement tout-à-fait legitimate. As long as our Legislative Councils were only named by one class of privileged citizens, as long as differences remained with regard to electoral rights between the cities and the country, between the patricians and the people, the executive power chosen by these Councils, as well as the law elaborated within them, could have no other purpose than to assure and regulate the domination of an aristocracy over the nation. So it was necessary, in the interest of the liberty of the people, to overthrow this regime, and replace it with that of the sovereignty of the people.

Universal suffrage once established, we thought we had assured the liberty of the populations. Well, that was a great illusion, and we could say that the consciousness of that illusion has led in several cantons to the fall, and in all, to the demoralization that is so obvious today among the radical party. The radicals have not wished to fool the people, as our so-called liberal press assures them, but they were fooled themselves. They were really convinced when they promised the people liberty, by means of universal suffrage, and full of that conviction, they had the power to lift up les masses and overthrow the established aristocratic governments. Today, instructed by experience and by the practice of power, they have lost that faith in themselves and in their own principle, and that is why they are slaughtered and so profoundly corrupted.

And indeed, the thing appears so natural and so simple: once the legislative power and the executive power will emanate directly from popular election, mustn't they become the pure expression of the will of the people, and could that will produce anything but the liberty and prosperity of the people?

All the lies of the representative system rest on that fiction, that a power and a legislative chamber elected by the people absolutely must or even can represent the real will of the people. The people, in Switzerland as everywhere, instinctively, inevitably want two things: the greatest material prosperity possible with the greatest freedom of existence, movement and for themselves: the best organization of their economic interests and the complete absence of any political power, any political organization,—since every political organization leads inevitably to the negation of their liberty. Such is the basis of all the instincts of the people.

The instincts of those who govern, as much as those who make the laws as those who exercise the executive power, are, precisely because of their exceptional positions, diametrically opposed. Whatever their sentiments and their democratic intentions, from the height where they find themselves placed, they do not consider society except as a tutor considers his pupil. But between the tutor and the pupil equality cannot exist. On the one hand, there is the feeling of superiority, inevitably inspired by a superior position; on the other, that of an inferiority that results from the superiority of the tutor, exercising either the executive power, or the legislative power. Whoever says political power, says domination; but where domination exists, there must necessarily be men, a more or less great part of society that is dominated, and those who are dominated necessarily detest those who dominate them, while those who dominate must necessarily repress, and consequently oppress those who are subject to their domination.

Such is the eternal history of political power, since that power has been established in the world. That is also what explains why and how some men who have been the reddest democrats, the most furious rebels, when they are among the mass of the governed, become excessively moderate conservatives as soon as they rise to power. We ordinarily attribute these palinodes to treason. That is an error; their principal cause is the change of perspective and position, and never forget that the positions and the necessities they impose are always more powerful than the hatred or ill will of individuals.

Touched by this truth, I would not fear to express this conviction, that if tomorrow we established a government and a legislative council, a parliament, made up exclusively of workers, these workers who are today firm socialist democrats, would become the day after tomorrow determined aristocrats, bold or timid worshippers of the principle of authority, oppressors and exploiters. My conclusion is this: *we must completely abolish, in principle and in fact, everything that is called political power; because as long as political power exists, there will be dominators and dominated, masters and slave, exploiters and exploited. Political power once abolished, we must replace it by the organization of the productive forces and economic services.*

Let us return to the Swiss. Among us, as everywhere else, the governing class is quite different and completely separate from the mass of the governed. In Switzerland, as everywhere, however egalitarian our political constitutions may be, it is the bourgeoisie that governs, and it is the laboring people, including the peasants, which obeys its laws. The people have neither leisure, nor the necessary instruction to concern themselves with government. The bourgeoisie, possessing both, have, not by right, but in fact, the exclusive privilege of it. So political equality is only, in Switzerland as everywhere, a puerile fiction, a lie.

But being separated from the people by all the conditions of its economic and social existence, how can the bourgeoisie realize, in the government and in our laws, the sentiments, the ideas, the will of the people? It is impossible, and the daily experience proves to us, in fact, that in the legislation as well as in the government, the bourgeoisie let itself be guided primarily by its own interests and instincts, without worrying much about those of the people.

It is true that all our legislators, as well as all the members of our cantonal governments, are elected, either directly or indirectly, by the people. It is true that on election days, the proudest bourgeois, however little ambition they may have, are forced to make court to His Majesty the sovereign people. They come to it hat in hand, and seem to have no other will than its own. But this is only a bad quarter of an hour to pass. Once the elections are over each returns to their daily occupations: the people to their work, and the bourgeoisie to the lucrative business and political intrigues. They do not encounter one another, they hardly know each other any more. How will the people, crushed by their labor and ignorant of the majority of the questions that are discussed, control the political acts of its representatives? Isn't it obvious that the control exercised by the voters over their representatives is only a pure fiction? But as popular control, in the representative system, is the sole guarantee of popular liberty, it is obvious that this liberty is also only a fiction.

In order to protect against that inconvenience, the radical democrats of the canton of Zurich have made triumph a new political system, that of the *referendum*, or direct legislation by the people. But the *referendum* is itself only a palliative means, a new illusion, a lie. In order to vote, with full knowledge of the issues and with an entire liberty, on the laws that are proposed or that they push to propose themselves, the people would have to have the time and the necessary instruction to study them, nurture them, and discuss them; it should transform itself into an immense parliament in the open fields. That is only rarely possible and only on great occasions, when the proposed law excites the attention and touches the interests of everyone. These cases are exceedingly rare. Most of the time, the laws proposed have such a special scope, that you must have the habit of political and legal abstractions to grasp their true scope. They naturally escape the attention and comprehension of the people, who vote blindly on them, on their faith in their favorite orators.—taken separately, each of these laws appears too insignificant to interest the people much, but together they form a ring that enchains them. So it is that with or despite the *referendum*, they remain, under the name of the sovereign people, the instrument and very humble servant of the bourgeoisie.

We see well, in the representative system, even corrected by the *referendum*, that popular control does not exist, and as there cannot be serious liberty for the people without this control, we conclude that our popular liberty, our government by ourselves, is a lie.

What happens each day in all the cantons of Switzerland confirms this sad conviction in us. Where is the canton where the people exercise a real and direct action of the laws produced in its Grand-Conseil and on the measures ordered by its Petit-Conseil? Where is this fictive sovereign not treated by its own representatives like an eternal minor, and where is it not forced to obey commandments from on high, of which most of the time it does not know the reason of the aim?

The largest part of the business and the laws, and much of the important business and laws, which have a direct relations with well-being, with the material interests of the communes, are over the head of the people, without the people knowing it, caring about it and getting involved in it. They are compromised, bound, and sometimes ruined, without them being aware of it. They have neither the habit, nor the time necessary to study all that, and it leaves free its representa-

tives, who naturally serve the interests of their class, of their own world, not those of the people, and whose greatest art consists in presenting to them their measures and their laws under the most harmless and the most popular aspect. The system of the democratic representation is that of the hypocrisy and perpetual lies. The stupidity of the people is needed, and it bases all its triumphs on it.

As indifferent and patient and the populations of our cantons show themselves, they still have certain ideas, certain instincts for liberty, independence and justice on which it is good to touch, and that a skillful government will take care not to offend. When popular sentiment feels itself attacked on these points that constitute so to speak the *sanctus sanctorum* and entire political conscience of the Swiss nation, then they awaken from their habitual torpor and revolt, and when they revolt, they sweep everything away: constitution and government, Petits and Grand-Conseils... The whole progressive movement in Switzerland, until 1848, has proceeded by a series of cantonal revolutions. These revolutions, the always present possibility of these popular uprisings, the salutary fear that they inspire, such is still today the only form of control that really exists in Switzerland, the only limit that stops the overflowing of the ambitious and self-serving passions of its governors.

It was also great weapon that the radical party used to overthrow our aristocratic constitutions governments. But after having used so fortunately, it broke it, so a new party could use it against it in its turn. How was it broken? By destroying the autonomy of the cantons, by subordinating the cantonal governments to the federal power. From now on, the cantonal revolutions, *the only means available to the cantonal population to exert a real and serious control on their governors, and keep in check the despotic tendencies inherent in every government*, these salutary uprisings of popular indignation have become impossible. They break themselves powerlessly against federal intervention.

Let us suppose that the population of a canton, at the end of their patience, rises against its government, what will happen? According to the Constitution of 1848, the Federal Council not only has the right, it has the duty to send there as many federal troops, taken from the other cantons, as will be necessary to reestablish public order and to give force to the laws and constitution of the canton. The troops will not leave the canton before the constitutional and legal order are perfectly reestablished there; that is to say, naming things frankly by their names, before the *regime, the ideas and men who enjoy some sympathies of the Federal Council had completely triumphed*. Such has been the outcome of the last insurrection of the canton of Geneva in 1864.

This time, the radicals were able to estimate at their own expense the consequences of the system of political centralization inaugurated by themselves in 1848. Thanks to this system, the Republican populations of the townships today have an all-powerful sovereign: *the federal power*, and to safeguard their freedom, it is that power that they must be able to control and even overthrow if necessary.—It would be easy for me to prove that, apart from quite extraordinary circumstances, unless a unanimous and strong passion should seize the entire Swiss nation, all the cantons together at the same time, neither that control, nor that overthrow will ever be possible.

Let us first see how the federal government is constituted. It consists of the Federal Assembly, the legislature power, and the Federal Council, the executive power. The Federal Assembly consists of two chambers: the National Chamber, directly elected by the people of the cantons, and the Chamber of States, consisting of two members from each canton, elected almost everywhere by the Grand Councils of the cantons. It is the Federal Assembly that elects within itself the seven members of the Federal Council executive.

Among all the elective bodies, it is the National Council that is obviously the most democratic, the most frankly popular, because it is named directly by the people. However, no one will contest, I hope, that is not democratic and that it must be much less so than the cantonal Grand Councils or the legislative chambers of the cantons. And that is for a very simple reason.

The people, who are inevitably ignorant and indifferent, thanks to the economic situation in which they still find themselves today, know well only the things that touch them closely. They understand clearly their daily interests, their business each day... Beyond that begins for them the unknown, the uncertain, and the danger of political mystifications. As they possess a great dose of practical instinct, they are rarely fooled in the communal elections, for example. They more or less know the business of their commune, it interests them a great deal, and they know how to choose from among themselves the men most capable of leading them well. In these affairs, the control itself is possible, since they are done under the eyes of the voters, and concern the most intimate aspects of their daily existence. That is why the communal elections are always and everywhere the best, the most really in conformity with the sentiments, interests, and will of the people.

The elections for the Grands-Conseils, as well as for the Petits-Conseils, there where the latter are made directly by the people, are already much less perfect. The political, judiciary and administrative questions the solution and good direction of which constitutes the principal task of these Councils, are usually unknown to the people, exceed the limits of its daily practice, and nearly always escape its control; and they must they must confide them to men who, living in a sphere almost absolutely separated from their own, are nearly unknown to them; if they know them, it is only by their speeches, not in their private life. But the speeches are deceptive, especially when they are intended to attract the goodwill of the people, and address questions that the people know very poorly and often do not understand at all.

It follows that the cantonal Grands-Conseils are already and must necessarily be much more distant from the popular sentiment than the communal Councils. However we cannot say that they are absolute strangers. Thanks to the long practice of liberty and to the habit of the Swiss people to read the papers, our Swiss populations know at least roughly their cantonal affaires and they are more or less interested in it. However, they are completely ignorant of federal affairs and attach no interest to it, and as a result they are absolutely indifferent to knowing who represents them and what their delegates judge it useful to do in the Federal Assembly.

The Council of States, consisting of members elected by the Councils of the cantons, is by itself still more removed from the people as that first Chamber at least issues directly from popular election. It represents the double quintessence of the bourgeois parliamentarianism. It is entirely dominated by the political abstractions and by the exclusive interests of our governmental classes.

Elected by a Federal Assembly thus constituted, the Federal Council, in its turn, must be inevitably, not only foreign, but hostile to all the instincts of independence, justice and liberty that animate our populations. Apart from the republican forms that do not diminish, but that only hides the power that it exerts, without any other control than the Federal Assembly, in the most important, as in the most delicate affairs of the Swiss, it only distinguishes itself very slightly from the authoritarian governments of Europe. It sympathizes with them and shares nearly all their oppressive passions.

If the exercise of popular control in cantonal affairs is excessively difficult, in the federal affairs, it is absolutely impossible. These affairs are furthermore made exclusively in the high official

regions, above the head of our populations, so that, most of the time, these last completely ignore them.

In the affair of the extradition treaty concluded recently with imperial France, in that of the expulsion of Mazzini, of the violence committed against the princess Obolenski, of the extradition with which Mme. Limousin is threatened, and in the hunt ordered for all the cantonal police by the Federal Council against Mr. Nechayev, affairs that touched so close to our national dignity, our national right, and even our national independence, have the Swiss people been consulted? And if they had been consulted, would they have given their consent to measures as contrary to all our traditions of liberty as hospitality as they are disastrous for our honor? Certainly not. So how, in a country that calls itself a democratic republic and that is supposed to govern itself, could such measures be commanded by the federal power and executed by our cantonal police?

It is the fault of the press, some say, of the press that has no other mission than to call the attention of the Swiss people to all the questions that may interest his well-being, his liberty or his national independence, and that in all these cases has not fulfilled his duty. It is true, the conduct of the press has been deplorable. But what was the cause? It is that all of the Swiss press, aristocratic or radical, is a bourgeois press, and that if we set aside a few papers written by the workers' societies, there does not yet exist among us a properly popular press. There was a time when the radical press was proud to represent the aspirations of the people. This time is long gone. The radical press, as well as the party whose name it bears, now only represents the individual ambition of its leaders who would hold office and places already taken, according to the saying: "Get out of there so that I can put myself there." Moreover, for many years, radicalism has renounced its revolutionary extravagances, as the conservative or aristocratic parties, on their side, gave up all their outdated aspirations surannées. There are almost no actual differences between the two parties, and we will soon see them merge into a single party of conservatism and bourgeois domination, opposing with a desperate resistance the revolutionary and socialist aspirations of the people. Is it any wonder that after that the radical press has not fulfilled what it no longer considers its duty? Let us be grateful that it has not yet openly sided with the Governments.

But let us suppose that in one way or another, either by the press or by other means, the attention of populations of one or more cantons are drawn to some unpopular measure ordered by the Federal Council and executed by their cantonal Governments. What can they do to stop the execution? Nothing. Can they overthrow their government? The intervention of federal troops will be able to prevent it. Can they protest in their popular assemblies? The Federal Council has nothing to do with the popular assemblies, and it recognizes no limit to its power but orders issued by the Federal Chambers; and for the latter to embrace the party of the indignant populations, that same indignation would have to have won at least half of the cantons of Switzerland. To overthrow the federal government, including the Federal Council and the Legislative Chambers, it would take more than the uprising of a few cantons; it would take a national revolution in Switzerland.

It is clear that for the federal power popular control does not exist. The establishment of this power was the crowning of the Governmental edifice in the Republic, the death of Swiss liberty. So what do we see? The conservative or aristocratic party, in all cantons, after having made all-out war on the system of political centralization, created in 1848 by the radical party, begins to rally to it in a quite conspicuous manner. Today it embraces warmly the party of the Federal

Council against the Council of State of Fribourg in the case of Mme. Limousin. What does this mean?

This simply proves that the aristocratic party, instructed by experience, has ended by understanding that the radical party, much more conservative and governmental than itself, by elevating the federal government above the autonomy of the cantons, has created a magnificent instrument, not for liberty, but of government, an all-powerful means of consolidating the domination of the rich bourgeoisie in all the cantons and to oppose a salutary barrier to the threatening aspirations of the proletariat.

But if the system of political centralization, instead of increasing the amount of liberty enjoyed by the Swiss, tends on the contrary to annihilate it absolutely, has it at least fortified and increased the independence of the Helvetian republic with regard to foreign powers?

No, it has considerably diminished. As long as the cantons were autonomous, the federal government wished to win, even by an unworthy complacency, the good graces of a foreign power, it had no right, nor even any opportunity to do so. It could neither conclude the extradition treaties, nor order the cantonal police to hunt down political refugees, nor force the cantons to deliver them to the despots. It would not have dared to demand of the canton of Ticino the expulsion of Mazzini, nor of the canton of Fribourg the extradition of Ms. Limousin. Exercising only an excessively limited power over the cantonal Governments, the federal government, on the other hand, did not have to answer for their actions before the foreign powers, and when the latter demanded something of it, it usually took shelter behind its constitutional powerlessness. The cantons were autonomous, and it had no right to command them. It was necessary that the representatives of the powers negotiate directly with the cantonal governments, and when it was a question of a political refugee, it was enough that they be transported to a nearby canton, so that the foreign minister must begin his process again. It never ended... diplomacy most often abandoned its prosecution discouraged. The right of asylum, that traditional and sacred right of Switzerland, remained intact, and no foreign government had the right to blame the federal government for that, which was very much against it all, precisely because of its powerlessness.

Today, the federal government is powerful. It has the incontestable right to command the cantons in all international questions; in this way, it has become responsible with regard to foreign diplomacy. These diplomats have nothing to do with the cantonal governments, being able from now on to address complaints and orders to the federal government, which, no longer able to hide behind its powerlessness, which no longer exists constitutionally, must either comply with the demand made to it or, confining himself to its right and the sentiment of national dignity, of which he is today the only official representative vis-à-vis all the foreign powers, to withhold it. But if, in the majority of cases, it cannot consent to what the powers demand of it, without cowardice, it must recognize, on the other hand, that a refusal on his part, while saving our national dignity, may expose the republic to great dangers.

Such is the difficult position that the Constitution of 1848 has made for the Federal Council. By concentrating and thereby rendering more comprehensible the political responsibility of our little republic towards the great States of Europe, it could not increase, at the same time, in a very sensible manner, our military power; and that increase of material strength was, however, necessary so that the Federal Council could maintain with dignity the new rights which it had invested it. On the contrary, although the number of our troops has increased considerably, and in general our army is much better organized and disciplined than it had been in 1848, it is certain that our strength of resistance, the only one that a republic as small as ours could have,

has diminished, and this for two reasons: first, because the military force of the great States has increased in a proportion much more serious than in ours; and especially because the energy of our national resistance rests much more on the intensity of the republican sentiments that animate our populations, that can rise at need as one man, than on the artificial organization of our regular forces, and because the system of political centralization that we have had the good fortune to enjoy for the last twenty-two years, has precisely the effect, in Switzerland as elsewhere, of the diminishing of liberty and consequently also the slow but sure disappearance of that energy, of passion and popular action, which is the true foundation of our national power, the only guarantee of our independence.

Invested with a great external responsibility, but not with a force sufficiently organized to sustain it, and too distant from the people, by its very constitution, to draw from it a natural force, the Federal Council should at least be composed of the most patriotic, dedicated, intelligent, and energetic of the Swiss. Then, there would still be some chance that it would not fail absolutely in its difficult mission. But, like that same constitution, the Federal Council is condemned to be nothing but the quintessence and the supreme guarantee of bourgeois conservatism of Switzerland, there is every reason to fear that there would always have within her much more of Céréssoles than of Staempfli. So we should expect to see our freedom, our dignity and our republican national independence diminish every day.

Today Switzerland finds itself caught in a dilemma:

It may not want to return to his past regime, that of the political autonomy of the cantons, which was a confederation of independent states and politically separate from each other. The recovery of such a constitution would result in the loss of infallible Switzerland, stop short all the major economic progress it has made since the new centralist constitution overturned the barriers that separated and isolated the cantons. Economic centralization is one of the essential conditions for the development of wealth, and this centralization would have been impossible if we had not abolished the political autonomy of the cantons.

It could not want to return to its past regime, to that of the political autonomy of the cantons, which made of them a confederation of states politically separated and independent from one another. The reestablishment of such a constitution would have had as an inevitable consequence the impoverishment of the Swiss, would have stopped dead the great economic progress that it has made, since the new centralist constitution has overturned the barriers separated and isolated the cantons. Economic centralization is one of the essential conditions of the development of wealth, and that centralization would have been impossible, if they had not abolished the political autonomy of the cantons.

On the other hand, the experience of twenty-two years proves to us that political centralization is equally deadly to the Swiss. You kill its liberty, put in danger its independence, make it a complacent and servile policeman for all the powerful despots of Europe. By decreasing its moral strength, it compromises its material existence...

What to do then? To return to the political autonomy of the cantons is an impossible thing. To preserve political centralization is not desirable.

The dilemma thus posed admits only one solution: *it is the abolition of every political state, as much cantonal as federal, it is the transformation of the political federation into an economic federation, national and international.*

Such is the end toward which all of Europe obviously marches today.



Meanwhile, Switzerland, thanks to its new Constitution, every day loses a portion of its independence and freedom. The years 1869 and 1870 will be an epoch in the history of our national decline. Never has any Swiss government shown such contempt for our republican sentiment, nor so much servile condescension for the arrogant and haughty demands of the great foreign powers as the Federal Council, which has within it men such as the lawyer Cérésole.

And never have the Swiss people Suisse shown so much shameful indifference to the odious acts accomplished in their name.

To show how a people who respect themselves and who are as jealous of their national independence as of their domestic liberties act in such circumstances, I will end this brochure by citing two acts that have taken place in English.

After the attempt of Orsini on the life of Napoléon III, the French government dared to demand of England the extradition of Bernard, a French refugee, accused of complicity with Orsini, and the expulsion of several other French citizens, among them Félix Pyat, who in a pamphlet, published after the attack, had championed the regicide. Lord Palmerston, who paid court to Napoléon III, asked nothing better than to satisfy him; but he encountered an insurmountable obstacle in the English law, which puts all foreigners under the protection of the common law/right and makes England, for the persecuted of any country or government whatever, an inviolable asylum.

However, Lord Palmerston was an extremely popular minister. Confident in that popularity, and desirous of doing a good, neighborly service to his friend Napoléon III, he dared present to parliament a new law governing foreigners, which, if it had been accepted, would have removed all the political refugees from the common right and delivered them up to the will of the government.

But he had hardly presented his bill, when a storm arose over all of England. The whole soil of Great Britain was covered with monster meetings. All the English people took the part of the foreigner against their favorite minister. Before that immense, imposing manifestation of popular indignation, Lord Palmerston fell—Bernard, Félix Pyat, and many others were acquitted by the English jury and borne in triumph by the workers of London, to the unanimous applause of all of England.

Napoléon III was forced to swallow that pill. And here is the other fact:

In 1863, the Italian government, in concert with the French government, had worked out an excellent business. It was a question of compromising, to doom the great Italian patriot Mazzini. For that, the government of Victor-Emmanuel had sent to Lugano, where Mazzini was then, one named Greco, an agent of the Italian police. Greco had requested an interview with Mazzini in order to announce to him his intention of assassinating Napoléon III. Warned by his friends, Mazzini turned a deaf ear, giving the impression that he did not understand. Arriving at Paris, Greco was immediately seized by the French police, and his trial was held. He denounced Mazzini as having sent him to Paris in order to kill Napoléon III. Following that lying accusation, the French government demanded once more of the government of the queen of England the extradition or at least the expulsion of Mazzini. But Mazzini had already published an article, in which he maintained and proved that Greco was nothing but an agent provocateur who had been sent to draw him into a despicable ambush. That question was treated in Parliament, and here is what the Queen's minister, Lord John Russell, said on that occasion: "The French government maintains that Mazzini had enlisted Greco to assassinate the emperor. But Mazzini maintains on

the contrary, that Greco was sent to him by the two governments to compromise him. Between these two contrary affirmations, we cannot hesitate. Without doubt, we must believe Mazzini.”

That is how one safeguards, even under a monarchic regime, the liberty, dignity and independence of one’s country. And Switzerland, which is a republic, makes itself the policeman, now of Italy, now of France, of Prussia, or of the czar of Russia!

But, someone will say, England is a powerful country, while Switzerland, republic though it may be, is comparatively a very weak country. Its weakness advises it to yield, for if it wanted to oppose too great a résistance to even the unjust demands and the hurtful injunctions of the great foreign powers, it would be lost.

That would appear very plausible, but nevertheless nothing is more false, for it is precisely by these shameful concessions and this cowardly deference that Switzerland will be doomed.

Today, on what bases does the independence of Switzerland rest?

There are three: First is the right of the people, the historic right and faith in the treaties that guarantee the neutrality of the Swiss.

Second, there is the mutual jealousy of the great neighboring states, of France, Prussia and Italy, each of which covets, it is true, a portion of Switzerland, but none of which wishes to see the other two divide it among themselves, without receiving or taking a portion at least equal to theirs.

Third, finally, there is the ardent patriotism and republican energy of the Swiss people.

Must we prove that the first basis, that of respect for treaties and rights, is perfectly null? Morals, we know, only exerts an extremely weak influence on the domestic policy of states; it exerts none of their foreign policy. The supreme law of the State is itself the preservation of the State,—and since all states, since they have existed on the earth, are condemned to a perpetual struggle: a struggle against their own populations, whom they oppress and ruin, a struggle against all the foreign states, each of which is only powerful on the condition that the others are weak; and as they can only preserve themselves in that struggle by increasing their power each day, as much within, against their own subjects, as without, against the neighboring powers, it results that the supreme law of the State is the increase of its power to the detriment of internal liberty and external justice.

Such is, in its pure reality, the unique morality, and unique aim of the State. It worships God himself only insofar as it is him exclusive God, the sanction of its power and of what it calls its right, that is its right to be not matter what and to always expand to the detriment of all the other states. Everything that serves that end is commendable, legitimate, virtuous. Everything that harms it is criminal. So the morality of the State is the overturning of human justice, of human morals.

That transcendent, extra-human and thus anti-human morality of the state is not only the result of corruption of the men who fulfill its functions. You could say rather that the corruption of these men is the natural, necessary consequence of the institution of States. This morality is nothing but the development of the fundamental principle of the State, the inevitable expression of a need inherent in the State. The State is nothing other than the negation of humanity; it is a restricted collectivity that wants to take its place and wants to impose itself as a supreme end, to which all must serve and all must submit .

It was natural and easy in antiquity, while the idea of humanity was unknown, while each people loved exclusively its national gods, which gave it the power of life and death over all the

other nations. Human right then existed only for the citizens of the State. Everything outside the state was doomed to pillage, massacre and slavery.

It is no longer so today. The idea of humanity becomes increasingly powerful in the civilized world, and even, thanks to the expansion and the increasing speed of communication and thanks to the influence, even more material than moral, of civilization on the barbarian peoples, it already begins to penetrate these latter. This idea is the invisible power of the century, with which the powers of the day, the States, must count. They cannot submit to it in good faith, because that submission on their part would be tantamount to suicide, the triumph of humanity only being achieved by the destruction of the states. But they can no longer deny or rebel openly against it, because having become too powerful today, it could kill them.

In this painful alternative, there remains to them only one option: it is hypocrisy. They give the air of respect, they do not speak, they no longer act except in its name, and they violate it every day. Do not blame them for that. They cannot act otherwise, their position having become such that they can no longer preserve themselves except by lying. Diplomacy has no other mission.

So what do we see? Whenever one State wants to declare war on another, he begins by issuing a manifesto addressed not only to his own subjects, but to the whole world, in which, putting all the right on his own side, it tries to prove that that it only breathes humanity and love of peace, and that suffused with these generous and peaceful sentiments, it suffered a long time in silence, but that the increasing iniquity of the enemy finally forced it to draw the sword from its scabbard. It swears at the same time that, disdainful of all material conquest and not seeking any increase in its territory, it will end this war as soon as justice is restored. Its opponent responds with a similar manifesto in which naturally all the right, justice, humanity, and all the generous sentiments are found on its own side. These two opposing manifestos are written with the same eloquence, they breathe the same righteous indignation, and one is as sincere as the other, that is to say that both lie shamelessly, and only fools allow themselves to be taken in...

The informed men, all those who have some experience of politics, do not even take the trouble of reading them; but they seek, on the contrary, to sort out the interests that drive to two adversaries to that war, and to weigh their respective forces in order to predict the outcome. Evidence that moral considerations don't enter in at all.

The right of people, the treaties that govern the relations of states, are deprived of any legal sanction. They are, in each determined period of history, the material expression of the balance resulting from the mutual antagonism of the states. As long as there are states, there will be no peace. There will only shorter or longer truces, armistices concluded by the discouraged, by these eternal belligerents, the states, and as soon as a State feels strong enough to profit by breaking this balance, it will never fail to do. All history is there to prove it.

So it would be a great folly on our part to base our security on faith in the treaties that guarantee the independence and neutrality of the Swiss. We should found it on bases that are more real.

The antagonism of interests and mutual jealousy of the States surrounding Switzerland offer a much more serious guarantee, it is true, but still very inadequate. It is perfectly true that none of these states alone could lay hands on Switzerland, without all the others immediately opposing it, and you can be sure that the division of Switzerland could not be made at the beginning of a European war, when each state, still uncertain of success, would be well advised to hide its ambitious views. But that division could still be made at the end of a great war, to the profit of the victorious states, and even the benefit of the vanquished states, as compensation for other territories that they could be forced to yield. This is clear.

Let us suppose that the great war that we prophesy daily breaks out in the end, between France, Italy and Austria on one side, and Prussia with Russia on the other. If it is France that triumphs, what will prevent it from seizing French-speaking Switzerland and giving Ticino to Italy? If it is Prussia that wins, what will prevent it from getting its hands on the part of German-speaking Switzerland it has coveted for so long, except to give up, if it appears necessary as a compensation, at least a portion of French-speaking Switzerland to France and Ticino to Italy?

It will doubtless not be the gratitude that these States will experience for the great services as policeman that the Federal Council has made for them before the war. We would have to be very naive to rely on the gratitude of a State. Gratitude is a feeling, and feelings have nothing to do with politics, which has no other motive than interests. We must permeate ourselves with that idea that the sympathies or antipathies that our formidable neighbors may inspire in us, cannot have the least influence on our national security. Let them love us and have a heart full of gratitude towards us, if they find the dismemberment of Switzerland is possible, they will tear us apart. Let them hate us as much as they want, but if they are convinced of the impossibility of dividing Switzerland among themselves, they will respect us. So we must create this impossibility. But being able to be based on the calculations of diplomacy, that impossibility can only reside in the republican energy of the Swiss people.

Such is then the only real and serious basis of our security, of our liberty, of our national independence. It is not by veiling, nor by belittling our republican principle, it is not by shamefully asking the despotic powers to continue to permit us to be, in the midst of monarchical states, the only republic of Europe, it is not by striving to win their good graces by shameful deference;—no, it is by raising high our republican flag, it is by proclaiming our principles of liberty, equality and international justice, it is by frankly becoming a center of propaganda and attraction for the people, and an object of respect and hatred for all the despots, that we will save Switzerland.

And it is in the name of our national security, as much as in the name of our republican dignity, that we should protest against the odious, unspeakable, and deadly acts of our Federal Council.

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Mikhail Bakunin  
The Bears of Berne and the Bear of Saint-Petersburg  
Patriotic lament for a humiliated and hopeless Switzerland  
March 1870

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