



From the Supplement to issue 49/50 of *l'en de hors*, December 20, 1924

THE ABC

of « our » anarchist individualist demands

You told me the other day that you are an “individualist”. Could you tell me more exactly what individualists are and what they want? I know several notable, decorated people, exercising high functions who also declare themselves individualists. Their ways of speaking and behaving, however, do not resemble yours. What should I conclude from this?

There is, in fact, Individualism and Individualism, as there are *fagots and fagots*.¹ There is a bourgeois, careerist Individualism — an Individualism of the privileged and the monopolists, which has nothing to do with our own, which is the opposite of our own. In order to survive, to prosper, to achieve its ends, bourgeois Individualism — competitive Individualism — relies on the authority of man over man and the exploitation of man by man, uses the methods of education and action that they imply, resorts to the institutions that support them. We are anti-authoritarian individualists, deniers, adversaries of authority and exploitation, no matter who exercises them. We are anarchist individualists — *anarchisant* individualists, if you will.² The words do nothing to the thing. It is in order not to lengthen a term that is already understood enough by itself that we rid it of accessory qualifiers and that we often quite simply use the term “Individualist.”

It is, in passing, useful to point out that the noun **anarchy** does not evoke, etymologically speaking, any idea of attack, violence, economic organization, dictatorship

¹ *Il y a fagot et fagot* is a French proverbial phrase, meaning that things of a similar type can differ. — TRANSLATOR.

² *Anarchisant* here could have the sense of process (*anarchizing*) or approximation (*anarchish*.) — TRANSLATOR.

of a social category. It is a word taken from Greek and which means absence or negation of political, governmental, administrative authority, by extension of the institutions that embody this authority.

*From what you have just said, I understand that your **Individualism** differs totally from what you call bourgeois Individualism. Could you briefly explain to me what it consists of?*

By “Individualism” we mean a certain conception of human life that gives first place, the essential place to the “individual fact”³ — that considers the autonomy, integrity, inviolability of the human person — of the social unity — of the individual — man or woman — as the basis, the reason for being and the end of relations between earthlings, wherever they live and whatever their race.

Your definition is conspicuous by its brevity, I agree. However, it does not completely satisfy me. Is Individualism — your own — a party? As such, it should present a program, formulate distinctive demands, advocate reforms, modifications, transformations of social life intended to establish a state of affairs allowing this program to be realized. Can you tell me what it really is — provide me, for example, with a list of individualist demands?

« Our » Individualism is not a party.⁴ I have just defined it as a particular conception of human life. It cannot therefore set out or formulate any programme advocating an action intended to put it in possession of public powers, of the administration of things. Individualists of our kind know very well that the current social and political organisation is eminently resistant to the realization of their conception of life. It is therefore relatively easy for them to present a list of demands, which are like a practical and living commentary on the definition of Individualism

³ The French *fait* can mean *fact, act, event or happening*. I have opted for fact in most cases. — TRANSLATOR.

⁴ « *En guillemets* »: Most writers pose a few very individual problems for translators. For example, the most unlikely words can become “technical terms.” In the writings of E. Armand, *camarade, milieu* and *determinisme* all seem to do just a bit more work than we might expect them to. But Armand also makes a peculiar use of quotation marks, sometimes where we would expect “scare quotes,” but also particularly around possessive pronouns: “Citoyen de « mon » monde,” “« Notre » individualisme,” etc. It is perhaps not surprising that some little extra fuss might be made around questions of possession—around “the unique and its property”—but it isn’t always clear whether the intent is to underline the proprietary relation, to problematize it, or to do a bit of both.

As a working strategy in translations, I have simply chosen, where it is a question of these possessive pronouns, to maintain the original publication or some very close approximation, to leave the translated word en guillemets: “Citizen of « My » World,” “« Our » Individualism,” etc. And we will see, over time, whether or not the practice gives up more of its secrets. With more familiar sorts of scare-quoting, I have chosen to use the guillemets to signal instances where the word in question has a particular significance for Armand. So, for example, a central figure in Armand’s world is the « en-dehors ». — Note from the translator’s “Rambles in the Fields of Anarchist Individualism.”

that I have just indicated to you. I have no intention of exhausting in the table that follows all the individualist demands — all the “concretizations” of the aspirations of our comrades. It is certain that some are omitted and I am not sure that they would be formulated in the same way by all those whom we consider as our own. However, such as they are, they represent the general tendency of « our » Individualism; they explain how we situate ourselves with regard to the parties and other conceptions of human life. This table finally gives a fairly accurate account of our attitude and our propaganda, in general.

Therefore, the Individualists that we are *claim for the individual — man or woman, isolated or associated* — as soon as they are old enough to determine themselves and this without any restriction or hindrance:

Full and complete faculty of conducting themselves, for and by themselves, that is to say, to evolve, to develop, to experiment as they please — according to what their own temperament, reflections, aspirations, will and personal determinism push or lead them to do; in a word, without having to account for their actions or deeds except to themselves;

Full and complete faculty of expression, profession, dissemination, publication of their thoughts or opinions — in writing or by word of mouth — in public or in private;

Full and complete faculty of possession, in an inalienable and definitive manner, *the means of production* (tools, instruments, mechanisms, machines, plots of land or subsoil, any productive devices) in whole or in part. And to *dispose* of the result of the productive effort — the *strictly* individual result — in other words, the *product*. Consequently, *full and complete ability* to trade said product, to exchange it, to alienate it free of charge or for a fee, to bequeath it in any manner whatsoever;

Full and complete faculty of disposition of individual assets, that is to say of any utilities obtained in exchange for personal production (the means of production and housing being included in this asset);

Full and complete faculty of occupation and development of any dwelling or any land that is uninhabited or unoccupied, or that the occupant cannot develop without exploiting others;

Full and complete *faculty* of determination of one's own morals in general and one's emotional, sentimental, sexual life in particular;

Full and complete *faculty* of expounding any conception, doctrine, theory, formula, teaching — economic, philosophical, scientific, literary, artistic, educational, pedagogical, recreational, religious, hygienic or any of other character whatsoever; Full and complete ability to test, realize, apply said conception, doctrine, etc. — of the methods and systems to which they can give rise;

Full and complete *faculty* of living in *isolation*, outside, away from any group, any association, any milieu. Full and complete ability to form a couple, a household of several people, a family, a patriarchal or matriarchal environment; of agreement among a few to live a common existence on the basis of very close affinities from whatever point of view;

Full and complete *faculty* of associating voluntarily in all areas where human activity can be exercised or radiate; whatever the experiments to be pursued, the ends to be

achieved — whether from an economic, intellectual, ethical, recreational or any other point of view — whether these associations have as their object production, consumption, means of transport and communication, the guarantee or insurance against any risks that human beings may have to consider during their existence; the functioning of a teaching method or an education system; the application of a scientific discovery, the use of a natural or artificial force; the profession of an idea or its propaganda; the realization of any conception of individual life or association;

Full and complete *faculty of federation* for isolated individuals, small-scale agreements or any associations;

Full and complete *faculty* of embracing any *solidarity*, of making any *contract* in any branch of human activity, for any purpose and for any duration;

Full and complete *faculty* of repudiating any solidarity, of terminating any contract and, for any association, of dissolving itself — either on notice or according to provisions to be provided, in all cases, at the time of the establishment or formation of the association;

Full and complete *faculty of negotiation* between producers and consumers or any others; Full and complete faculty of choosing the initiator, the instructor, the agent, the arbitrator, the professor, the depositary, the warehouseman; of the delegate, individual or association — whatever the content or purpose of the mandate entrusted;

Full and complete *faculty* of fixing a *value* for any object, product or consumer utility whatsoever. To vary this value, to debate it; to discuss its setting or variation. To resort to voluntary arbitration for the purpose of determining said value;

Full and complete *faculty* to mint, issue and circulate currency, labor vouchers, exchange vouchers, promissory notes, bills of exchange, transferable or non-transferable, registered or bearer. Full and complete faculty to attribute to them any value in discharge and to use them for the settlement of any transaction provided that said rate is neither forced nor obligatory;

Full and complete *faculty* of emulation or competition, whatever the branch of activity in which the individual or associate engages — provided that they are in a position to dispose of or take advantage without reservation of any of the opportunities offered to learn, to know and to improve themselves — of the means of production, of the facilities of travel and of publicity;

Special claims pertaining to women and mothers

Full and entire faculty for any woman — isolated or associated — to regulate her maternal function as she wishes, that is to say to avoid any unwanted maternity and to use for this purpose any method and any appropriate means. — Exclusive guardianship of the child until it is old enough to determine for and by itself. Full and entire faculty of the mother to delegate all or part of this guardianship to any individual — man or woman — or to any association.

Special claims pertaining to the child

Full and complete right for the child — boy or girl — to appeal or resort to arbitration, either to request a modification or any transformation of his or her guardianship status, or

to claim the granting of his or her emancipation — or for any other reason — the choice of the arbitrator or at least of one of the arbitrators remaining devolved to the child.

But in the spirit of the Individualists of our kind, the full realization of these demands not only is understood as a condition of *reciprocity* with regard to others, isolated or associated, but it is a function or complement of a state of the general mentality or of morals implying or guaranteeing the impotence, the impossibility for any man, milieu, administration, government or State whatsoever — and this without reserve or artifice — to meddle, interfere, intervene in, encroach on the life or the relations of human unities⁵ among themselves — the goal, the existence, the evolution or the functioning of groups, associations of individuals, federations of groups, of associations.

Despite the repetitions contained in your list, although some of your demands needed to be completed, interpreted and especially to undergo the test of practice, I admit that they constitute, as a whole, the characteristic tendency of your Individualism — this while pointing out to you that you are not the only ones to formulate several of them. I would now ask you by what signs, by what acts, by what manifestations of opinion can one recognize the Individualist as you understand him?

To speak frankly, we think that one is an individualist much more by temperament than because one has adhered to Individualism considered as a doctrine or because one has subscribed to the table of Demands above or to a similar list. One is an individualist because that is in one's "nature." One is also an individualist because reflections, study and personal life experiences have allowed latent or ignored tendencies to emerge, to assert themselves in a way favorable to individualism.

This understood, we regard as an Individualist — as one of us — anyone — man or woman — in a position to determine themselves, considers themselves as an autonomous, intangible unity, solely accountable to themselves for their words and gestures, their efforts and actions, without recognizing any other limits to their expansion, to their personal affirmation than the autonomy of others.

We regard as an Individualist — as one of us — anyone — man or woman — in a position to determine that they themselves:

Do not personally want to be dominated, governed or exploited by others, any more than they want to dominate, govern or exploit others;

Are in a state of legitimate defense against everything — conceptions of human existence, institutions, agents of execution or others — that aims, teaches, pursues or

⁵ I have rendered the French *unité* as *unity*, in the sense of a "single entity" (*OED*), which hopefully captures Armand's sense of individuals' internal plurality better than *unit*. In this context, the term should probably call to mind connections between this more-or-less mathematic sense of unity (one) and Stirner's *unique one*. — TRANSLATOR

realizes the subordination of the individual to the social, the oppression of the individual by Society;

Intend to regulate the course of their evolution, their particular determination, of the use and abuse on their knowledge of themselves, the exercise of their sensitivity, their capacity for reflection, their personal power of resistance to ambient influences, their own conception of life — in fact derive from, depend on, the choice of their experiences, their experiments, their search for the useful and the pleasant, and their fight against the encroachments of everything outside the self;

Want to base their relations with their fellow human beings solely on reciprocity;

Possess a will to exist, a love of life and a joy of living, conceived outside of any external intervention — regulations, laws, conventions, morals, traditions, or any other action, coercive or not.

I do not claim at that this whole presentation is not subject to clashes and divergences of detail, depending on the individualists to whom one would address it, but the individualists that we are agree — I believe I can affirm it — on the general tendency that emerges from the statements above.

Thus far, you have presented to me a general tendency, a state of mind or, if you like, a special mentality. All that is a little vague and verbose. But without being a party, does not your Individualism possess a Program of action of achievements — something palpable — a minimum program at least? In other words, what object does your propaganda pursue and what practical applications can it show?

Since we do not intend to impose ourselves or our ideas, — since we reject the use of organized violence, the use of constraint to bring about the realization of any of our demands, it is obvious that our propaganda will be done only through education and by example.

Our educational propaganda will consist of a serious, tight, documented, in-depth criticism of the institutions and regimes of domination and exploitation, examined, broken down in the light of our point of view of life — to spread the idea, to sow the conviction that it is preferable from all points of view to replace social or administrative constraint by the faculty of each person to develop according to their particular determinism and to unite with others through the play of personal affinities, — to demonstrate the absurdity of bending all temperaments, all individual dispositions to a unilateral teaching, to a uniform regulation. It is obvious that among so many other iniquities, absurdities or prejudices, our propaganda will pay particular attention to the mores that allow majorities to oppress minorities, the masses to stifle initiatives or isolated individuals, the State or the Administration to requisition a human being, in order to force them to participate in a task or to fulfill an obligation to which they are averse. Our propaganda will strive to combat the opinion that gauges the value of individuals taken separately, to the possession of monopolies or privileges that

they have seized or that they have inherited; it will propose another standard of personal assessment: a standard that relates individual value to culture, to the originality of the individual, to their capacity to resist external influences, to their power to use their passions.

Our propaganda will also set itself the task of demonstrating that as long as the means of production, capital, the ability to issue exchange values and competition are reserved for a privileged minority, an administration, a social body of some kind, or the State, all that will remain for other men is the liberty to exist as slaves, wage earners, and civil servants.

Our propaganda will finally be concerned with revealing to others the individualistic temperaments that are unaware of themselves and the individualistic states of mind that, for one reason or another, they have not yet had the opportunity to manifest themselves.

As for the propaganda by example, it will be inspired by the temperament of the person or persons who engage in it. It may consist of the individual practice of some of the demands that I have outlined, or of the formation of associations intended to experiment with several of them. It could also be summed up as an attitude of resistance and personal opposition to the encroachments of elements outside the self — the privileged, the administration, the State, etc. — at the risk and peril of the individualist or individualists who have adopted it or who have voluntarily shown solidarity with it.

If I have understood correctly, in this table of demands, it is only a question of the demand for what the bourgeoisie call "rights." Within your associations, will you not prescribe "duties" for yourselves?

Individualists of our sort know *neither rights nor duties*. Their relations with each other are based on a feeling called "*camaraderie*," a sort of *voluntary insurance* that individualists subscribe to among themselves to spare themselves from useless and avoidable suffering.

Our individualist associations are milieus whose constituents have decided among themselves to procure for themselves the greatest sum of joys and enjoyments compatible with the anarchist notion of life. The tendency is that within them is realized the satisfaction of all the needs, all the desires, all the aspirations that can be experienced, felt, conceived by beings who deny gods and masters in all areas.

"Competition" itself, as we understand it, is an aspect of this camaraderie that desires to lead each of us to assert ourselves, to realize ourselves, to present ourselves in all areas as ourselves, as our abilities allow or as our desires incite us.

I come back to your list of demands: you show yourselves to be adversaries of the State, which is very understandable, given your mentality. But you say nothing about parliamentarianism. Do you treat it with the same disapproval as the State?

Individualists of our sort consider the State as the very negation of the individual fact. It would be childish to persist in demonstrating this. In all times, the action of the State has consisted in subordinating to its existence, in using for its own benefit, individual aptitudes and faculties, in suppressing or at least rendering harmless the manifestations threatening to undermine its omnipotence. The State considers the social unity — the citizen, the subject, the protégé — as a material corvéable, taxable, requisitionable at will, in what it has and in what it is, which it is forbidden to resist or to shirk — or even to protest — under penalty of punishments that range from a financial fine to death. The state considers that when its preservation comes into play no consideration can prevail — it is ready to survive, to prolong its duration, to violate or disguise the most elementary rules of this morality, this legality, this collective or personal security of which its role — it thus justifies its existence — is to be the impeccable guardian. If it is necessary — for no other reason than the reason of State — it will dissolve any association, it will imprison or deport any individual whose activity or influence is formidable to it, it will prevent any expression of opinion that is contrary to it.

The action of parliamentarianism being analyzed very closely, we find that it has only served to legally sanction ways of acting that have already become established customs: and it is then useless — or it only serves to obstruct individual or collective demands — in order to perpetuate the political or economic domination of the dynasties of the great holders of capital-species and means of production, of the great landowners, of the high officials and administrators of the social organization, of the monopolists of all kinds: it is then harmful.

As for the parliamentary system, not only has it shown itself, since its establishment, to be the most faithful auxiliary of the State — by not sanctioning its worst attacks against the freedom of individuals, associations, manifestations of human thought — but it also consecrates, even when it functions fairly, the oppression of people, non-voters or electoral minorities, by the able-bodied or the majorities endowed with the right to vote. That is to say, the triumph, under all regimes and in all areas of the conservative, average political conception, of the mediocre mentality, which mentality is the result of a general opinion created, maintained, inspired by compulsory education, by a “popular” thought and literature subsidized, either by the government or by the privileged, whose interests they represent and defend more or less hypocritically.

Since you thumb your nose at the State, parliamentarianism, all government, could you explain to me how you conceive the functioning of an individualist society? You make no allusion to it in your demands.

Indeed, this table of demands is not intended, in my mind, to indicate under what conditions an individualist society could exist, but under what conditions individualists, isolated or associated, could evolve without hindrance, develop at ease, and finally “live their lives.” Moreover, since — according to us — the Individualist is a temperament, there could be no “Individualist Society” or rather there are as many individualist societies as there are individualist temperaments.

Where the individual fact occupies the foreground, it would result in the multiplicity of large or small associations, with diverse functions, constantly renewing themselves by the departure and entry of unities eager for experiences — family agreements and very small numbers — possibilities of isolated existences, hence: a universal tendency towards differentiation, decentralization, particularization. From this state of affairs would flow, for beings with an individualistic disposition, many opportunities to assert themselves, to improve themselves, to flourish — many opportunities that are lacking where it is the social that dominates and predominates, that presides over the efforts of men and their application. The well-understood interest of the Individualist is not in the establishment or installation of an individualistic society (can there exist a “society” without government and without administrative authority?), but to fortify and reinforce the position occupied or aimed at by the “individual fact.”

It is necessary to remember here that each time that the individual being succeeds, on a particular point, in freeing themselves from the tentacles of the social octopus, in inspiring in the environment respect for their personality, in leading it to deal with them by mutual agreement, as an equal, they have partly realized the Individualist society. We can say that it is the same when one of the demands of the table above passes into the customs and implants itself in the human mentality — the “Individualist Society” takes a step towards realization. The Individualist society “is made,” becomes as the human environment is saturated with anarchist individualism — it is a function of the situation that the individual fact acquires there.

It is necessary to understand that liberty is a concept, a phenomenon of a negative order — not a positive one. One is free, one becomes free to the extent that one succeeds in reducing the constraints of all kinds that weigh with all their weight on the personal determinism.

Should I conclude from all that has preceded that you perfectly admit the coexistence of associations — voluntary, it goes without saying — based on absolutely different economic conceptions? I suppose that in the society where individualists in your way “would evolve at ease,” one would encounter mutualist, cooperative, collectivist,

communist associations, etc. or organized internally according to methods very different from one another.

Indeed, the faculty of this coexistence — of this competition — fits well within the framework of our aspirations. To formulate it is to demonstrate — by the way — the futility of the conception of an “Individualist society.” This coexistence is necessary because, alone, it would allow the individualist by mistake, anyone who has not found the satisfaction expected in isolation, small-scale agreements, individualist associations, to experiment with other forms of association. After all, it is only in retrospect that one can determine or realize whether or not one is an Individualist.

Individualists — isolated or associated — we have never thought of demanding from non-individualist associations anything other than the guarantee of our autonomy and the assurance of their non-intervention in our realizations of the individualist life. Provided that these associations allow us to labor, to experiment as we please, do not hinder the propaganda of our demands, our aspirations, the presentation of the results of our experiments and the consequences to be drawn from them, we ask for nothing more.

We can foresee that in any state of affairs where associations were very developed a human being could simultaneously be part of several groups, whose functioning would differ totally according to the goal they would have in view. Moreover, given the nuances of personal temperaments — which our Individualism tends to amplify — associations of an individualistic nature would themselves differ from one to another, hence an increase in the field of experiences, of experiments offered to Individualists whose dispositions push them to prefer association to isolation or to agreements with a limited number of members.

Would you please to explain to me what — from your special individualist point of view — you mean by "exploitation," its disappearance or abolition constituting one of your most important demands?

By exploitation we mean the system by which any employer or hoarder of means of production can — in complete safety — extract a *net profit* from the production of the employee whose work he hires out.

We believe that the disappearance of the system of exploitation depends on the ability — for the isolated or associated producer — to possess the means of production in an inalienable and definitive manner. As soon as there is no longer a single producer deprived of the means of production, neither exploitation nor the exploiter have any reason to exist or to subsist.

We believe that there is also exploitation of the individual being when they are forced, constrained or obliged by a State, a Company, an Administration or any of their fellows to contribute or participate in benefits, taxes, duties, expenses, of whatever

nature, intended for the maintenance of institutions, the operation of services or the pay of civil servants of which they have no need, of which they make no use, of which they do not recognize the utility.

We also consider that there is exploitation when, in any way, a producer is forced, constrained or obliged to perfect — by the control of part of their personal effort — the share of production or maintenance of any being whose production is unequal or inferior to their own.

Naturally, there can be no question of exploitation when the individual consents voluntarily or offers to remunerate the efforts of one or more of their fellows whose profession or activity is useful or pleasant to them — for example the remuneration of a carrier, a peddler, a teacher, a doctor, an artist or a company taking charge of any service. Similarly, there can be no exploitation in the case of voluntary payment of a contribution intended to allow a patient to receive special care, a scholar to carry out certain scientific research, a musician to improve their art, a newspaper to continue or extend its publication, a sanatorium to build or expand, any association to pursue the goal it has set for itself, etc. etc.

You have repeatedly insisted on “competition.” Would individualists as you understand them be in favor of war, which seems to me to be an application of competition on a large scale?

We are indeed in favor of competition, in other words of the possibility for any consumer to compare various productions, to choose between them, to stimulate the producer by the demand for a more perfect production — of the possibility for the producer to offer a more original, more refined, better packaged production than the productions presented on the market at the same time. We believe that the abolition of competition between individuals or associations would result in a halt to improvement and research in all branches of human activity. To eliminate competition is to force the consumer to be content with an inferior or characterless product. The disappearance of competition, brought about by large-scale manufacturing concentration, mass production and the decline of craftsmanship, for example, results, without any possible doubt, in a general lowering of taste, a general decline in creative originality.

But it is because we hold to the faculty of competition between individuals or associations that we are the irreducible adversaries of war — that is to say, of the struggle for supremacy between States, political systems, rulers, monopolistic or privileged societies whose interests and aspirations have nothing in common with the evolution or development of the individual being. In all countries, the proclamation, the establishment of the *state of war* has the effect of reducing the Individual to the role of a living automaton, whose person and assets, even more than in a state of peace, are at the disposal of the Government or the military Authority, without any possibility of

protest, whatever resistance the will to live, the instinct of self-preservation may raise in them. As we see, this is the complete opposite of “competition.”

The Individualist claiming the existence of a state of affairs where it is impossible to impose or dictate a national or social or any kind of solidarity or contract: this would be enough to indicate that war — collective and individual slaughter, legally regulated and organized, which implies the most serious attack that can be made on personal autonomy — cannot in any case attract his sympathy.

I have found myself several times in the presence of anarchist-communists or libertarian communists. Like you, they fight against Authority, Exploitation, the State, coercive Institutions — like you, they denounce the misdeeds of the Government or Parliamentarianism. To hear you speak, you seem to agree on many points. In fact, how do you differ?

We anti-authoritarian individualists (or anarchist individualist) have, in fact, many points in common with anarchist-communists or libertarian communists. We think first of all that there is a communist temperament, a communist turn of mind, just as there is an individualist temperament, an individualist way of thinking. Secondly, it is obvious that there is no lack of room on the planet — and cannot be — for the propaganda and experimentation of the aspirations of each of these two tendencies.

It should be added that among the communists there are many comrades for whom we have great esteem, whose efforts we appreciate infinitely and with whom we are quite ready to work together in the task of criticizing the institutions and prejudices that hinder our respective developments.

What separates us from the communists is their conception of a society exclusively organized — from an economic point of view — on a communist basis. Since the means of production belong to the social Whole — since they cannot produce and consume, exchange its production or receive any utilities except through the intermediary of the administration of the said Whole — it is to be feared that the social unity (man or woman) will find itself in a state of inferiority and dependence, of tutelage with respect to the social Whole, whatever their personal aptitude for work, their talent, their originality, their culture.

But we can consider as belonging to our way of considering individualism the non-societary anarchist communists — that is to say the communists who do not make libertarian communism a doctrine of universal happiness or of world organization, but a question of temporary associations, for which they claim the integral possibility of existing, of realizing themselves, of developing and of functioning according to their communist aspirations. This without any ulterior motive of encroaching on the evolution of non-communist associations or of considering themselves “superior” to them.

I have heard of the sympathy shown to the "outlaws," to the illegalists, by individualists of your kind. What is there truth in this assertion?

Placed in a Society where the social contract and the conditions of economic existence are regulated, established and imposed in such a way that it is impossible for any of the members to discuss this contract or to escape it, it is clear that we cannot espouse the feelings of hatred and antipathy that animate the privileged and the profiteers of said social contract towards those who break it without putting any form to it. This explained, we believe that "irregularism" — of which illegalism is a form — and non-conformism in matters of economic obligations are a matter of character, of a tendency of mind and in no way a point of doctrine. We count comrades among the irregulars of all categories — among the economic "refractories" as among the refractories to the classical formulas in matters of arts, letters, education, morals, etc.

Moreover, in a Society where the system of repression takes on the character of vindictiveness, of vengeance that the upholders of the social order exercise on and against those who threaten them in the situation they occupy — or pursue the systematic lowering of human dignity — it is clear that the imprisoned person inspires more sympathy in us than the one who deprives him of his freedom or keeps him in prison. Not to mention that it is often among these "irregulars," those banned from circles based on the exploitation and oppression of producers, that we find courage, a contempt for brutal authority and its representatives, a force of persevering resistance to an intensive system of individual compression and brutalization that we would seek in vain among the regulars or those who stick to the trades tolerated by the police.

We have the deep conviction that in a humanity where opportunities to use individual energies would present themselves at the starting point of all personal evolution, where they would abound along the road of life, where the most irregular would find the faculty of multiple experiences and ease of movement, the special characters and mentalities in question would succeed in evolving fully, joyfully, without this being to the detriment of any other human being.

We must not forget that in view of the social contract — as it is currently known and applied, imposed and sanctioned — Individualists are necessarily asocial, illegal, amoral.

Given all of the above, how do you currently behave when you find yourself in the presence of any being or community encroaching on your autonomy, hindering your movements, restricting your activity?

The Individualist as we conceive them will never be found in the ranks of the dominators, the rulers, the oppressors, the exploiters, the restrictors of individual or collective liberty. That is an established point. The Individualist is absent from all the enterprises where the crushing of the disinherited and the squeezing of the wretched

are plotted. The Individualist will try, before going on the offensive, all the appeals to reason, all the recourses to conciliation. This accomplished, they will have to resist — to put out of harm's way, for themselves, for their own, to their comrades — their aggressor or the aggressors. That is the answer to your question. All means of agreement exhausted, the Individualist defends themselves, will defend themselves against any encroachment threatening their autonomy or their independence.

What can be done against a being who persists — despite all attempts at rapprochement, all appeals to their generosity or offers of arbitration — in imposing themselves or intervening in an milieu which, unanimously, does not want them or their intervention? Cease all relations with them or resort, as a last resort, to expulsion, if their insistence becomes materially dangerous.

It will be said that this solution poses — once again — the problem of relations between humans. Individualists of our tendency sincerely expect that following the intensive propaganda of their ideas, the dissemination in all places of their opinions, the at least partial realization of their aspirations — their example finally — the inhabitants of the planet will end up recognizing that it is more equitable and more in their interest, more pleasant as well, not to involve violence or the courts in the settlement of their disputes. If the interested parties cannot manage to settle them amicably, *voluntary* recourse to one or more arbitrators chosen by the parties in dispute is still the most expeditious and satisfactory procedure, it being understood that the functioning of voluntary arbitration varies according to the circumstances or the arrangements planned or decided by the individuals or associations that use it.

Since you reject the idea of obtaining the demands that you have listed for me by the use of organized violence or any coercive action — since you do not count on the dictatorship of a social category or on the weight of majorities, since the only recourse you have left is educational propaganda or propaganda by example, persuasion, modification or transformation of public opinion or of the general mentality — I conclude that you could not participate in any revolution? This will be my last question.

We are not, in fact, accidental revolutionaries if, by “revolution,” we mean a sudden, instantaneous, catastrophic transformation of the external conditions of existence of a human milieu. Such transformations — when they are not the result of a preparatory evolution — only exert a superficial, ineffective action. Once the delirium of upheaval that superficially agitated the milieu has calmed down, the general mentality regains equilibrium and finds itself in more or less the same state as at the moment when the revolutionary irruption broke out. We are therefore *permanent revolutionaries*, as we try to realize, in ourselves first of all, in our surroundings, in our relations with and in the company of our comrades, the particular conception that we entertain of life — individual life, plural life — to find there all our satisfactions, all our enjoyments. The more individual revolutions multiply, the closer we will come to the

advent of a permanent revolutionary state. After all, the general revolution is the sum of personal revolutions.

However, in the event of suppression, violation, suspension of the guarantees of the expression of thought, of the manifestation of opinions and their propaganda, of the freedom to assemble, to formulate collective or individual demands; in the event of obstacles to experiments or achievements that only involve those who attempt them; it is to be expected, to be awaited, that many individualists will transform their normal state of distrust and legitimate defense with regard to the State, Governments, Administrations and all other coercive institutions, into active participation in any resistance movement — individual deeds, insurrection, general strike or other actions — against the arbitrariness of the governors and the directors.

December 31, 1924

E. ARMAND.

Working translation by Shawn P. Wilbur, last revised December 29, 2024.

A CORVUS EDITION



2024