

My Principles

Ravachol

1892

While in prison, this document was dictated to the police by Ravachol. It remained unpublished until the historian Jean Maitron found it in the Paris Police Archives in 1964.

The above named, after having eaten his fill, spoke to us as follows:

“Messieurs, it is my habit, wherever I am, to do propaganda work. Do you know what anarchism is?”

We answered ‘No’ to this question.

“This doesn’t surprise me,” *he responded.* “The working class which, like you, is forced to work to earn its bread, doesn’t have the time to devote to the reading of pamphlets they’re given. It’s the same for you.”

“Anarchy is the obliteration of property.”

“There currently exist many useless things; many occupations are useless as well, for example, accounting. With anarchy there is no more need for money, no further need for bookkeeping and the other forms of employment that derive from this.”

“There are currently too many citizens who suffer while others swim in opulence, in abundance. This situation cannot last; we all should profit by the surplus of the rich; but even more obtain, like them, all that is necessary. In current society, it isn’t possible to arrive at this goal. Nothing, not even a tax on income, could change the face of things. Nevertheless, the bulk of workers think that if we acted in this way, things would improve. It is an error to think this way. If we tax the landlord, he’ll increase his rents and in this way will arrange for those who suffer to pay the new charges imposed on them. In any event, no law can touch landlords for, being the masters of their goods, we can’t prevent them from doing whatever they want with them. What, then, should be done? Wipe out property and, by doing this, wipe out those who take all. If this abolition takes place, we have to also do away with money, in order to prevent any idea of accumulation, which would force a return to the current regime.”

“It is in effect money that is the cause of all discord, all hatred, of all ambitions; it is, in a word, the creator of property. This metal, in truth, has nothing but an agreed upon price, born of its rarity. If we were no longer obliged to give something in exchange for those things we need to live, gold would lose its value and no one would seek it. Nor could they enrich themselves, because nothing they would amass could serve them in obtaining a better life than that of others. There would then no longer be any need of laws, no need of masters.

“As for religions, they’d be destroyed, because their moral influence would no longer have any reason for existence. There would no longer be the absurdity of believing in a God who doesn’t exist, since after death everything is finished. So we should hold fast to life, but when I say life I mean life, which does not mean slaving all day to make the bosses fat and, while dying oneself of hunger, become the authors of their well-being.”

“Masters aren’t necessary, these people whose idleness is maintained by our labor; everyone must make himself useful to society, by which I mean work according to his ability and his aptitude. In this way, one would be a baker, another a teacher, etc. Following this principle, work would diminish, and each of us would have only an hour or two of work a day. Man, not being able to remain without some form of occupation, would find his distraction in work; there would be no lazy idlers, and if they did exist, there’d be so few of them that we could leave them in peace and, without complaint, let them profit from the work of others.”

“There being no more laws, marriage would be destroyed. We would unite by inclination, and the family would be founded on the love of a father and mother for their children. For example, if a woman no longer loved he who she had chosen as a companion, she could separate from him and form a new association. In a word, complete freedom to live with those we love. If in the case I just cited there were children, society would raise them, that is to say, those who will love the children will take them in charge.”

“With this free union, there will be no more prostitution. Secret illnesses would no longer exist, since these are only born of the abuse of the coming together of the sexes; an abuse to which women are forced to submit, since society’s current conditions oblige them to take this up as a job in order to survive. Isn’t money necessary in order to live, earned at whatever cost?”

“With my principles, which I can’t in so little time lay out in full detail, the army will no longer have any reason to exist, since there will no longer be distinct nations; private property would be destroyed, and all nations would have joined into one, which would be the Universe.”

“No more war, no more disputes, no more jealousy, no more theft, no more murder, no more court system, no more police, no more administration.”

“The anarchists have not yet gone into the details of their constitution: the mileposts alone have been laid out. Today the anarchists are numerous enough to overthrow the current state of things, and if that hasn’t yet happened, it’s because we must complete the education of the followers, give birth in them to the energy and the firm will to assist in the realization of their projects. All that is needed for that is a shove, that someone put themselves at their head, and the revolution will take place.”

“He who blows up houses has as a goal the extermination of all those who, by their social standing or their acts, are harmful to anarchy. If it was permitted to openly attack these people without fearing for the police, and so for one’s skin, we wouldn’t set out to destroy their homes though explosive devices, which could kill the suffering classes they have at their service at the same time as them.”

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