

CHAPTER XIV

HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS BE ABOLISHED ?

SLAVERY results from laws, laws are made by Governments, and, therefore, people can only be freed from slavery by the abolition of Governments.

But how can Governments be abolished ?

All attempts to get rid of Governments by violence have, hitherto, always and everywhere resulted only in this: that in place of the deposed Governments, new ones established themselves, often more cruel than those they replaced.

Not to mention past attempts to abolish Governments by violence, according to the Socialist theory the coming abolition of the rule of the capitalists, *i.e.* the communalisation of the means of production, and the new economic order of society, is also to be instituted by a fresh organisation of violence, and will have to be maintained by the same means. So that attempts to abolish violence by violence, neither have in the past, nor, evidently, can in the future,

emancipate people from violence, nor, consequently, from slavery.

It cannot be otherwise.

Apart from outbursts of revenge or anger, violence is used only in order to compel some people against their own will to do the will of others. But the necessity to do what other people wish, against your own will, is slavery. And therefore as long as any violence, designed to compel some people to do the will of others, exists, there will be slavery.

All the attempts to abolish slavery by violence, are like extinguishing fire with fire, stopping water with water, or filling up one hole by digging another.

Therefore the means of escape from slavery, if such means exist, must be found not in setting up fresh violence, but in abolishing whatever renders governmental violence possible. And the possibility of governmental violence, like every other violence perpetrated by a small number of people upon a larger number, has always depended, and still depends, simply on the fact that the small number are armed, while the large number are unarmed, or that the small number are better armed than the large number.

That has been the case in all the conquests: it was thus the Greeks, the Romans, the Knights, and Pizarros conquered nations, and it is thus that people are now conquered in Africa and

Asia. And in this same way, in times of peace, all Governments hold their subjects in subjection.

As of old so now, people rule over other people only because some are armed and others are not.

In olden times, the warriors, with their chiefs, fell upon the defenceless inhabitants, subdued them, and robbed them; and all divided the spoils in proportion to their participation, courage, and cruelty; and each warrior saw clearly that the violence he perpetrated was profitable to him. Now, armed men (taken chiefly from the working classes) attack defenceless people: men on strike, rioters, or the inhabitants of other countries, and subdue them, and rob them (*i.e.* make them yield the fruits of their labour), not for themselves, the assailants, but for people who do not even take a share in the subjugation.

The difference between the conquerors and the Governments is only, that the conquerors themselves with their soldiers attacked the unarmed inhabitants, and, in cases of insubordination, carried their threats to torture and to kill into execution; while the Governments, in cases of insubordination, do not themselves torture or execute the unarmed inhabitants, but oblige others to do it, who have been deceived and specially brutalised for the purpose, and who are chosen from among the very people on whom the Govern-

ment inflicts violence. Thus violence was formerly inflicted by personal effort: by the courage, cruelty, and agility of the conquerors themselves; but now violence is inflicted by means of fraud.

So that if, formerly, in order to get rid of armed violence, it was necessary to arm oneself and to oppose armed violence by armed violence, now, when people are subdued not by direct violence but by fraud, it is only necessary, in order to abolish violence, to expose the deception which enables a small number of people to exercise violence over a larger number.

The deception by means of which this is done, consists in the fact that the small number who rule, on obtaining power from their predecessors, who were installed by conquest, say to the majority, "There are a lot of you, but you are stupid and uneducated, and cannot either govern yourselves or organise your public affairs, and therefore we will take those cares on ourselves: we will protect you from foreign foes, and arrange and maintain internal order among you; we will set up courts of justice, arrange for you, and take care of, public institutions: schools, roads, and the postal service; and, in general, we will take care of your well-being; and in return for all this, you only have to fulfil certain slight demands which we make; and, among other things, you must give into our complete control a small part of your incomes, and you must

yourselves enter the armies which are needed for your own safety and government.”

And most people agree to this, not because they have weighed the advantages and disadvantages of these conditions (they never have a chance to do that), but because from their very birth they have found themselves in conditions such as these.

If doubts suggest themselves to some people as to whether all this is necessary, each one thinks only about himself, and fears to suffer if he refuses to accept these conditions; each one hopes to take advantage of them for his own profit, and everyone agrees, thinking that by paying a small part of his means to the Government, and by consenting to military service, he cannot do himself very much harm.

But as soon as the Governments have the money and the soldiers, instead of fulfilling their promises to defend their subjects from foreign enemies, and to arrange things for their benefit, they do all they can to provoke the neighbouring nations and to produce war; and they not only do not promote the internal well-being of their people, but they ruin and corrupt them.

In the *Arabian Nights* there is a story of a traveller who, being cast upon an uninhabited island, found a little old man with withered legs sitting on the ground by the side of a stream. The old man asked the traveller to take him on

his shoulders and to carry him over the stream. The traveller consented, but no sooner was the old man settled on the traveller's shoulders than the former twined his legs round the latter's neck, and would not get off again. Having control of the traveller, the old man drove him about as he liked, plucked fruit from the trees, and ate it himself, not giving any to his bearer, and abused him in every way.

This is just what happens with the people who give soldiers and money to the Governments. With the money the Governments buy guns, and hire, or train up by education, subservient, brutalised, military commanders. And these commanders, by means of an artful system of stupefaction, perfected in the course of ages, and called discipline, make those who have been taken as soldiers into a disciplined army. Discipline consists in this, that people who are subjected to this training, and remain under it for some time, are completely deprived of all that is valuable in human life, and of man's chief attribute—rational freedom—and become submissive machine-like instruments of murder in the hands of their organised, hierarchical stratocracy. And it is in this disciplined army that the essence of the fraud dwells, which gives to modern Governments dominion over the peoples. When the Governments have in their power this instrument of violence and murder, that possesses no will of

its own, the whole people are in their hands, and they do not let them go again, and not only prey upon them, but also abuse them, instilling into the people, by means of a pseudo-religious and patriotic education, loyalty to, and even adoration of, themselves, *i.e.* of the very men who torment the whole people by keeping them in slavery.

It is not for nothing that all the kings, emperors, and presidents esteem discipline so highly, are so afraid of any breach of discipline, and attach the highest importance to reviews, manœuvres, parades, ceremonial marches, and other such nonsense. They know that it all maintains discipline, and that not only their power but their very existence depends on discipline.

Disciplined armies are the means by which they, without using their own hands, accomplish the greatest atrocities, the possibility of perpetrating which gives them power over the people.

And therefore the only means to destroy Governments is not force, but it is the exposure of this fraud. It is necessary people should understand: First, that in Christendom there is no need to protect the peoples, one from another; that the enmity of the peoples, one to another, is produced by the Governments themselves; and that armies are only needed for the advantage of the small number who rule; for the people it is not only unnecessary, but it is in the

highest degree harmful, serving as the instrument to enslave them. Secondly, it is necessary people should understand that the discipline which is so highly esteemed by all the Governments, is the greatest crime that man can commit, and is a clear indication of the criminality of the aims of Governments. Discipline is the suppression of reason and of freedom in man, and can have no aim other than preparation for the performance of crimes such as no man can commit while in a normal condition. It is not even needed for war when the war is defensive and national, as the Boers have recently shown. It is wanted, and wanted only, for the purpose indicated by William II.: for the perpetration of the greatest crimes—fratricide and parricide.

The terrible old man who sat on the traveller's shoulders behaved as the Governments do. He mocked him and insulted him, knowing that as long as he sat on the traveller's neck the latter was in his power.

And it is just this fraud, by means of which a small number of unworthy people, called the Government, have power over the people, and not only impoverish them, but do what is the most harmful of all actions—pervert whole generations from childhood upwards; just this terrible fraud which should be exposed in order that the abolition of Government and of the

slavery that results from it may become possible.

The German writer, Eugen Schmitt, in the newspaper *Ohne Staat*, which he published in Buda-Pesth, wrote an article that was profoundly true and bold, not only in expression but in thought. In it he showed that Governments, justifying their existence on the ground that they ensure a certain kind of safety to their subjects, are like the Calabrian robber-chief who collected a regular tax from all who wished to travel in safety along the highways. Schmitt was committed for trial for that article, but was acquitted by the jury.

We are so hypnotised by the Governments that such a comparison seems to us an exaggeration, a paradox, or a joke; but in reality it is not a paradox or a joke. The only inaccuracy in the comparison is that the activity of all the Governments is many times more inhuman, and, above all, more harmful, than the activity of the Calabrian robber. The robber generally plundered the rich; the Governments generally plunder the poor and protect those rich men who assist in their crimes. The robber doing his work risked his life, while the Governments risk nothing, but base their whole activity on lies and deception. The robber did not compel anyone to join his band; the Governments generally enrol their soldiers by force. All who paid the

tax to the robber had equal security from danger. But in the State, the more anyone takes part in the organised fraud, the more he receives not merely of protection but also of reward. Most of all, the emperors, kings, and presidents are protected (with their perpetual bodyguards), and they can spend the largest share of the money collected from the tax-paying subjects. Next in the scale of participation in governmental crimes come the commanders-in-chief, the ministers, the heads of police, governors, and so on, down to the policemen, who are least protected, and who receive the smallest salaries of all. Those who do not take any part in the crimes of Government, who refuse to serve, to pay taxes, or to go to law, are subjected to violence—as among the robbers. The robber does not intentionally vitiate people; but the Governments, to accomplish their ends, vitiate whole generations from childhood to manhood with false religious and patriotic instruction. Above all, not even the most cruel robber, no Sténka Rázin,¹ no Cartouche,² can be compared for cruelty, pitilessness, and ingenuity in torturing, I will not say with the villain kings notorious for their cruelty,—John the Terrible,

¹ The Cossack leader of a formidable insurrection in the latter half of the seventeenth century.—(Trans.).

² The chief of a Paris band of robbers in the early years of the eighteenth century.—(Trans.).

Louis XI., the Elizabeths, etc.,—but even with the present constitutional and Liberal Governments, with their solitary cells, disciplinary battalions, suppressions of revolts, and their massacres in war.

- Towards Governments, as towards Churches, it is impossible to feel otherwise than with veneration or aversion. Until a man has understood what a Government is, and until he has understood what a Church is, he cannot but feel a veneration for those institutions. As long as he is guided by them, his vanity makes it necessary for him to think that what guides him is something primal, great, and holy; but as soon as he understands that what guides him is not something primal and holy, but that it is a fraud carried out by unworthy people, who, under the pretence of guiding him, make use of him for their own personal ends, he cannot but at once feel aversion towards these people; and the more important the side of his life that has been guided, the more aversion will he feel.

People cannot but feel this when they have understood what Governments are.

People must feel that their participation in the criminal activity of Governments, whether by giving part of their work, in the form of money, or by direct participation in military service, is not, as is generally supposed, an indifferent action, but besides being harmful to

oneself and to one's brothers, is a participation in the crimes unceasingly committed by all Governments, and a preparation for new crimes which Governments, by maintaining disciplined armies, are always preparing.

The age of veneration for Governments, notwithstanding all the hypnotic influence they employ to maintain their position, is, more and more, passing away. And it is time for people to understand that Governments not only are not necessary, but are harmful and highly immoral institutions, in which an honest, self-respecting man cannot and must not take part, and the advantages of which he cannot and should not enjoy.

And as soon as people clearly understand that, they will naturally cease to take part in such deeds, *i.e.* cease to give the Governments soldiers and money. And as soon as a majority of people ceases to do this, the fraud which enslaves people will be abolished.

Only in this way can people be freed from slavery.