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Émile Henry's defense during the trial after Henry had thrown a bomb at Paris' Café Terminus, killing one and injuring twenty.

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It is not a defence that I present to you. I am not in any way seeking to escape the reprisals of the society I have attacked. Besides, I acknowledge only one tribunal — myself, and the verdict of any other is meaningless to me. I wish merely to give you an explanation of my acts and to tell you how I was led to perform them.

I have been an anarchist for only a short time. It was as recently as the middle of the year 1891 that I entered the revolutionary movement. Up to that time, I had lived in circles entirely imbued with current morality. I had been accustomed to respect and even to love the principles of fatherland and family, of authority and property.

For teachers in the present generation too often forget one thing; it is that life, with its struggles and defeats, its injustices and iniquities, takes upon itself indiscreetly to open the eyes of the ignorant to reality. This happened to me, as it happens to everyone. I had been told that life was easy, that it was wide open to those who were intelligent and energetic; experience showed me that only the cynical and the servile were able to secure good seats at the banquet. I had been told that our social institutions were founded on

justice and equality; I observed all around me nothing but lies and impostures.

Each day I shed an illusion. Everywhere I went, I witnessed the same miseries among some, and the same joys among others. I was not slow to understand that the grand words I had been taught to venerate: honour, devotion, duty, were only the mask that concealed the most shameful basenesses.

The manufacturer who created a colossal fortune out of the toil of workers who lacked everything was an honest gentleman. The deputy and the minister, their hands ever open for bribes, were devoted to the public good. The officer who experimented with a new type of rifle on children of seven had done his duty, and, openly in parliament, the president of the council congratulated him! Everything I saw revolted me, and my intelligence was attracted by criticism of the existing social organization. Such criticism has been made too often for me to repeat it. It is enough to say that I became the enemy of a society that I judged to be criminal.

Drawn at first to socialism, I was not slow in separating myself from that party. I have too much love of freedom, too much respect for individual initiative, too much repugnance for military organization, to assume a number in the ordered army of the fourth estate. Besides, I realized that basically socialism changes nothing in the existing order. It maintains the principle of authority, and, whatever self-styled free-thinkers may say about it, that principle is no more than the antiquated survival of faith in a superior power.

Scientific studies gradually made me aware of the play of natural forces in the universe. I became materialist and atheist; I came to realize that modern science discards the hypothesis of God, of which it has no need. In the same way, religious and authoritarian morality, which are based on false assumptions, should be allowed to disappear. What then, I asked myself, was the new morality in harmony with the laws of nature that might regenerate the old world and give birth to a happy humanity?

It was at this moment that I came into contact with a group of anarchist comrades whom I consider, even today, among the best I have ever known. The character of these men immediately captivated me. I discerned in them a great sincerity, a total frankness, a searching distrust of all prejudices, and I wanted to understand the idea that produced men so different from anyone I had encountered up to that point.

The idea — as soon as I embraced it — found in my mind a soil completely prepared by observation and personal reflection to receive it. It merely gave precision to what already existed there in vague and wavering form. In my turn I became an anarchist.

I do not need to develop on this occasion the whole theory of anarchism. I merely wish to emphasize its revolutionary aspect, the destructive and negative aspect that brings me here before you.

At this moment of embittered struggle between the middle class and its enemies, I am almost tempted to say, with Souvarine in *Germinal*: 'All discussions about the future are criminal, since they hinder pure and simple destruction and slow down the march of the revolution…'

I brought with me into the struggle a profound hatred which every day was renewed by the spectacle of this society where everything is base, everything is equivocal, everything is ugly, where everything is an impediment to the outflow of human passions, to the generous impulses of the heart, to the free flight of thought.

I wanted to strike as strongly and as justly as I could. Let us start then with the first attempt I made, the explosion in the Rue des Bon-Enfants. I had followed closely the events at Carmaux. The first news of the strike had filled me with joy. The miners seemed at last to have abandoned those useless pacific strikes in which the trusting worker patiently waits for his few francs to triumph over the company's millions. They seemed to have entered on a way of violence which manifested itself resolutely on the 15th August 1892. The offices and buildings of the mine were invaded by a crowd of people tired of suffering without reprisals; justice was about to be

wrought on the engineer whom his workers so deeply hated, when the timorous ones chose to interfere.

Who were these men? The same who cause the miscarriage of all revolutionary movements because they fear that the people, once they act freely, will no longer obey their voices; those who persuade thousands of men to endure privations month after month so as to beat the drum over their sufferings and create for themselves a popularity that will put them into office: such men — I mean the socialist leaders — in fact assumed the leadership of the strike movement.

Immediately a wave of glib gentlemen appeared in the region; they put themselves entirely at the disposition of the struggle, organized subscriptions, arranged conferences and appealed on all sides for funds. The miners surrendered all initiative into their hands, and what happened, everyone knows.

The strike went on and on, and the miners established the most intimate acquaintance with hunger, which became their habitual companion; they used up the tiny reserve fund of their syndicate and of the other organizations which came to their help, and then, at the end of two months, they returned crestfallen to their pit, more wretched than ever before. It would have been so simple in the beginning to have attacked the Company in its only sensitive spot, the financial one; to have burnt the stocks of coal, to have broken the mining machines, to have demolished the drainage pumps.

Then, certainly, the Company would have very soon capitulated. But the great pontiffs of socialism would not allow such procedures because they are anarchist procedures. At such games one runs the risk of prison and — who knows? — perhaps one of those bullets that performed so miraculously at Fourmies? That is not the way to win seats on municipal councils or in legislatures. In brief, having been momentarily troubled, order reigned once again at the Carmaux.

More powerful than ever, the Company continued its exploitation, and the gentlemen shareholders congratulated themselves on

restaurants, to the Terminus and Foyot. You will add other names to the bloody list of our dead.

You have hanged in Chicago, decapitated in Germany, garroted in Jerez, shot in Barcelona, guillotined in Montbrison and Paris, but what you will never destroy is anarchy. Its roots are too deep. It is born in the heart of a society that is rotting and falling apart. It is a violent reaction against the established order. It represents all the egalitarian and libertarian aspirations that strike out against authority. It is everywhere, which makes it impossible to contain. It will end by killing you.

Emile Henry

April 1894

We will not spare the women and children of the bourgeois, for the women and children of those we love have not been spared. Must we not count among the innocent victims those children who die slowly of anaemia in the slums because bread is scarce in their houses; those women who grow pale in your workshops, working to earn forty sous a day and fortunate when poverty does not force them into prostitution; those old men whom you have made production machines all their lives and whom you cast on to the waste heap or into the workhouse when their strength has worn away?

At least have the courage of your crimes, gentlemen of the bourgeoisie, and grant that our reprisals are completely legitimate.

Of course, I am under no illusions. I know my deeds will not yet be understood by the masses who are unprepared for them. Even among the workers, for whom I have fought, there will be many, misled by your newspapers, who will regard me as their enemy. But that does not matter. I am not concerned with anyone's judgement. Nor am I ignorant of the fact that there are individuals claiming to be anarchists who hasten to disclaim any solidarity with the propagandists of the deed. They seek to establish a subtle distinction between the theoreticians and the terrorists. Too cowardly to risk their own lives, they deny those who act. But the influence they pretend to wield over the revolutionary movement is nil. Today the field is open to action, without weakness or retreat.

Alexander Herzen, the Russian revolutionary, once said: 'Of two things one must be chosen: to condemn and march forward, or to pardon and turn back half way.' We intend neither to pardon nor to turn back, and we shall always march forward until the revolution, which is the goal of our efforts, finally arrives to crown our work with the creation of a free world.

In that pitiless war which we have declared on the bourgeoisie, we ask for no pity. We give death, and we know how to endure it. So it is with indifference that I await your verdict. I know that my head is not the last you will cut off; yet others will fall, for the starving are beginning to know the way to your great cafes and

the happy outcome of the strike. Their dividends would be even more pleasant to gather in.

It was then that I decided to intrude among that concert of happy tones a voice the bourgeois had already heard but which they thought had died with Ravachol: the voice of dynamite.

I wanted to show the bourgeoisie that henceforward their pleasures would not be untouched, that their insolent triumphs would be disturbed, that their golden calf would rock violently on its pedestal until the final shock that would cast it down among filth and blood.

At the same time I wanted to make the miners understand that there is only one category of men, the anarchists, who sincerely resent their sufferings and are willing to avenge them. Such men do not sit in parliament like Monsieur Guesde and his associates, but they march to the guillotine.

So I prepared a bomb. At one stage the accusation that had been thrown at Ravachol came to my memory. What about the innocent victims? I soon resolved that question. The building where the Carmaux Company had its offices was inhabited only by the bourgeois; hence there would be no innocent victims. The whole of the bourgeoisie lives by the exploitation of the unfortunate, and should expiate its crimes together. So it was with absolute confidence in the legitimacy of my deed that I left my bomb before the door to the Company's offices.

I have already explained my hope, in case my device was discovered before it exploded, that it would go off in the police station, where those it harmed would still be my enemies. Such were the motives that led me to commit the first attempt of which I have been accused.

Let us go on to the second incident, of the Cafe Terminus. I had returned to Paris at the time of the Vaillant affair, and I witnessed the frightful repression that followed the explosion at the Palais-Bourbon. I saw the draconian measures which the government decided to take against the anarchists. Everywhere there were spies,

and searches, and arrests. A crowd of individuals were indiscriminately rounded up, torn from their families, and thrown into prison. Nobody was concerned about what happened to the wives and children of these comrades while they remained in jail.

The anarchist was no longer regarded as a man, but as a wild beast to be hunted everywhere while the bourgeois Press, which is the vile slave of authority, loudly demands his extermination.

At the same time, libertarian papers and pamphlets were seized and the right of meeting was abrogated. Worse than that: when it seemed desirable to get one comrade completely out of the way, an informer came and left in his room a packet which he said contained tannin; the next day a search was made, on a warrant dated the previous day, a box of suspicious powders was found, the comrade was taken to court and sentenced to three years in gaol. If you wish to know the truth of that, ask the wretched spy who found his way into the home of comrade Merigeaud!

But all such procedures were good because they struck at an enemy who had spread fear, and those who had trembled wanted to display their courage. As the crown of that crusade against the heretics, we heard M. Reynal, Minister of the Interior, declare in the Chamber of Deputies that the measures taken by the government had thrown terror into the camp of the anarchists. But that was not yet enough. A man who had killed nobody was condemned to death. It was necessary to appear brave right to the end, and one fine morning he was guillotined.

But, gentlemen of the bourgeoisie, you have reckoned a little too much without your host. You arrested hundreds of men and women, you violated scores of homes, but still outside the prison walls there were men unknown to you who watched from the shadows as you hunted the anarchists, and waited only for the moment that would be favourable for them in their turn to hunt the hunters.

Reynal's words were a challenge thrown before the anarchists. The gauntlet was taken up. The bomb in the Cafe Terminus is the answer to all your violations of freedom, to your arrests, to your

searches, to your laws against the Press, to your mass deportations, to your guillotining. But why, you ask, attack those peaceful cafe guests, who sat listening to music and who, no doubt, were neither judges nor deputies nor bureaucrats? Why? It is very simple. The bourgeoisie did not distinguish among the anarchists. Vaillant, a man on his own, threw a bomb; nine-tenths of the comrades did not even know him. But that meant nothing; the persecution was a mass one, and anyone with the slightest anarchist links was hunted down. And since you hold a whole party responsible for the actions of a single man, and strike indiscriminately, we also strike indiscriminately.

Perhaps we should attack only the deputies who make laws against us, the judges who apply those laws, the police who arrest us? I do not agree. These men are only instruments. They do not act in their own name. Their functions were instituted by the bourgeoisie for its own defence. They are no more guilty than the rest of you. Those good bourgeois who hold no office but who reap their dividends and live idly on the profits of the workers' toil, they also must take their share in the reprisals. And not only they, but all those who are satisfied with the existing order, who applaud the acts of government and so become its accomplices, those clerks earning three or five hundred francs a month who hate the people even more violently than the rich, that stupid and pretentious mass of folk who always choose the strongest side — in other words, the daily clientele of Terminus and the other great cafes!

That is why I struck at random and did not choose my victims! The bourgeoisie must be brought to understand that those who have suffered are tired at last of their sufferings; they are showing their teeth and they will strike all the more brutally if you are brutal with them. They have no respect for human life, because the bourgeoisie themselves have shown they have no care for it. It is not for the assassins who were responsible for the bloody week and for Fourmies to regard others as assassins.