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The Interrogation of Émile Henry

Émile Henry

1894

On February 12 you entered the Café Terminus.

Yes, at eight o'clock.

Your bomb was in your pants belt.

No, in my overcoat pocket.

Why did you go to the Café Terminus?

I had first gone to Bignon, the Café de la Paix and the
Americain but there weren't enough people. So I went
to the Terminus and I waited.

There was an orchestra. How long did you wait?

An hour.

Why?

So that there would be a bigger crowd.

And then?

You know full well.

I'm asking you.

I threw away my cigar! I lit the fuse and then taking the bomb in my hand I left and, as I was leaving the café, from the doorway I threw the bomb.

D: You hold human life in contempt.

No, the life of bourgeois.

You did everything you could to save yours.

Yes, so I could start again. I counted on leaving the cafe, closing the door, getting a ticket at the Saint-Lazare station, escaping, and starting over the next day.

As you left you met a waiter. Further on a certain Etienne detained you saying: "I've got you, you wretch!" You answered: "Not yet." What did you then do?

I fired at him.

He fell. What did you say?

That he was lucky that I didn't have a better revolver.

Then you were detained by a hairdresser. What did you do?

I shot him with the revolver.

Q: He was hit and hasn't healed. Agent Poisson followed you.

At this moment, since a crowd was gathering, I stopped. I waited for Agent Poisson and fired three shots at him with my revolver.

You were then arrested, and the policemen had a hard time tearing you from the fury of the crowd.

Which didn't know what I'd done.

You had special bullets on you. Why?

To cause more harm.

And a dagger on which there was a preparation.

I had poisoned the blade in order to strike an anarchist informer.

You were determined to strike the agent with that weapon?

Certainly.

You were seated at a table near the door and had thrown the device in front of you. Why didn't you hit more people with that explosion, since you had aimed at the orchestra?

I threw the bomb too high. It hit a lamp and went off course.

A muffled explosion was heard and the cafe was completely destroyed: tables, mirrors, woodwork were broken. There were many wounded: twenty. One of them, M. Borde has since died. His leg was covered with wounds. Another, M. Van Herreweghen received forty wounds. There were women: Mme Kingsbourg, who is still suffering from her wounds, many others that you will hear. And these women were so terrified that they have hidden their presence and their wounds. You said that the more bourgeois that die the better it would be.

That's just what I think.

At first you said you were called Breton. A little later you revealed yourself and you said that your name is Emile Henry and you gave the design of your device. How was it made?

It was a small kettle of tin containing a detonator and a fuse.

You said that you had been relatively unsuccessful. What does that mean?

I wanted to kill more, but the kettle wasn't properly closed.

You had put projectiles in it.

I had put 120 pellets.

Vaillant, who said he wanted to wound and not kill, had put nails and not pellets.

Me, I wanted to kill and not wound.

Your domicile wasn't known.

I had said that I didn't have a domicile in Paris, I declared that I arrived from Marseilles or Peking.

Soon afterwards a room at the Villa Faucheur was robbed. The Police superintendent finds explosives and recognizes that this is your home.

I don't know who robbed my home.

I don't care. I don't have to beware of my silence. I know full well that I'll be condemned to death.

Listen; I think there's a confession that's damaging to your pride. Vaillant admitted that he received 100 F from a burglar. You don't want to recognize that you extended your hand to receive the money from a theft, the hand that we today see covered in blood.

My hands are covered in blood, like your red robe is!
In any case, I don't have to answer you.

You are accused and it's my duty to interrogate you.

I don't recognize your justice.

You don't recognize justice. Unfortunately for you, you are in its hands, and the jury will be able to appreciate this.

I know!

(The Presiding Judge): Be seated.

You were warned that your domicile has been discovered and at that point you declared that quantities of explosives must have been found at your home.

I had enough to make twelve to fifteen bombs.

(To the jury) You know the crime and the accused, who has just cynically confessed his crime.

It's not cynicism, it's conviction.

Did you want to kill the waiter Etienne?

I wanted to kill all those who put themselves in the way of my escape.

Did you want to kill the Agent Poisson?

Certainly. His saber was raised and he would have killed me.

Did you want to kill the people at the Hotel Terminus?

Certainly, as many as possible.

Did you want to destroy the building?

Oh, I could care less!

The Presiding Judge to the Jury: This would suffice to establish the guilt of the accused. But whatever the crime, justice — and this is our honor — never deviates from the usual rules. We must examine all the details and pause before another act for which the accused is reproached.

Your father lived at Brevannes, then he went to Spain, took part in the Paris Commune, and your mother found herself a widow with three children. You received a grant at the Ecole J-B Say, at seventeen you qualified for admission to the Ecole Polytechnique. You didn't continue.

In order not to be a soldier and be forced to fire on the unfortunate, like at Fourmies.

You found a job with a builder, M. Bordenave, your relative. How much did you earn?

In Venice I earned 100F a month.

Why did you leave?

For reasons foreign to the affair.

You said that he wanted to force you to carry out a secret surveillance, which revolted you. M. Bordenave when questioned protested.

He recognized that there was a misunderstanding.

You then found another job.

I suffered through three months of poverty before this!

In any event, you soon had a position.

A quite mediocre one: 100 to 120 F a month.

At this moment you come under the influence of one of your brothers. A short while later you were arrested after a meeting in honor of Ravachol, and your boss found anarchist works in your desk, most notably a translation of an Italian newspaper indicating how to make nitroglycerine and in which we read: "Long live theft, long live dynamite!" We can see there the rules you put in practice in the attack on the Rue des Bons-Enfants. So then your boss fired you.

I was fired when these papers were found.

You looked for work at a watchmaker's. Then you were employed by *l'En dehors*, edited by Matha, who was condemned in 1892 — the year you arrived at the newspaper — for inciting insubordination among soldiers. You refused to be a soldier.

I had done three years of school battalion and that was all I could do as a soldier.

You avoided the call to military service and your mother disapproved of you.

She feared my expatriation.

On the recommendation of Ortiz, a burglar, you went to work for M. Dupuis.

I don't know what Ortiz has done since I knew him.

M. Dupuis had increased your salary.

I had much affection for him.

Would you like to repeat before the jury the confessions you made during the questioning? I would very much like it to be you that speaks.

Certainly. Tomorrow I'll give the motives for my act. The *Société des Carmaux* is represented in Paris by its administration. After the strike I bought a kettle. I had dynamite, a primer, fuses.

(The questioning continues. The accused refuses to say what he did during 1893. During a difficult period in the questioning the Presiding Judge shouts:)

Beware of your silence!