

Address of August Spies

August Spies

1885

Your Honor: In addressing this court I speak as the representative of one class to the representative of another. I will begin with the words uttered five hundred years ago on a similar occasion, by the Venetian Doge Faheri, who addressing the court, said:

“MY DEFENSE IS YOUR ACCUSATION.”

The causes of my alleged crime your history!” I have been indicted on the charge of murder, as an accomplice or accessory. Upon this indictment I have been convicted. There was no evidence produced by the State to show or even indicate that I had any knowledge of the man who threw the bomb, or that I myself had anything to do with the throwing of the missile, unless, of course, you weight the testimony of the accomplices of the State’s Attorney and Bonfield,¹ the testimony of Thompson and Gilmer,

BY THE PRICE THEY WERE PAID FOR IT.

If there was no evidence to show that I was legally responsible for the deed, then my conviction and the execution of the sentence is nothing less than willful, malicious, and deliberate murder, as foul a murder as may be found in the annals of religious, political, or any other sort of persecution. There have been many judicial murders committed where the representatives of the State were acting in good faith, believing their victims to be guilty of the charge accused of. In this case the representatives of the state cannot shield themselves with a similar excuse. For they themselves have fabricated most of the testimony which was used as a pretense to convict us; to convict us by a jury picked out to convict! Before this court, and before the public, which is supposed to be the State, I charge the State’s Attorney and Bonfield with the heinous

CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MURDER.

I will state a little incident which may throw light upon this charge. On the evening on which the Praetorian Guards of the Citizen’s Association, the Bankers’ Association, the Association of the Board of Trade men, and the railroad princes, attacked the meeting of workingmen on the Haymarket, with murderous intent—on that evening, about 8 o’clock, I met a young man, Legner by name, who is a member of the Aurora Turn-Verein. He accompanied me, and never left me on that evening until I jumped from the wagon, a few seconds before the explosion occurred. He knew that I had not seen Schwab on that evening. He knew that I had no such conversation with anybody as Mr. Marshal Field’s protege, Thompson, testified to. He knew that I did not jump

¹ Bonfield was the Chicago chief of police.

from the wagon to strike the match and hand it to the man who threw the bomb. He is not a Socialist. Why did we not bring him on the stand? Because the honorable representatives of the State, Grinnell² and Bonfield,

SPIRITED HIM AWAY.

These honorable gentlemen knew everything about Legner. They knew that his testimony would prove the perjury of Thompson and Gilmer beyond any reasonable doubt. Legner's name was on the list of witnesses for the State. He was not called, however, for obvious reasons. Aye, he stated to a number of friends that he had been offered \$500 if he would leave the city, and threatened with direful things if he remained here and appeared as a witness for the defense. He replied that he could neither be bought nor bulldozed to serve such a damnable and dastardly plot. When we wanted Legner, he could not be found; Mr. Grinnell said—

AND MR. GRINNELL IS AN HONORABLE MAN!³

that he had himself been searching for the young man, but had not been able to find him. About three weeks later I learned that the very same young man had been kidnapped and taken to Buffalo, N.Y. by two of the illustrious guardians of "Law and Order," two Chicago detectives. Let Mr. Grinnell, let the Citizens' Association, his employer, let them answer for this! And let the public sit in judgment upon the would-be assassins.

No, I repeat, the prosecution has not established our legal guilt. Notwithstanding the purchased and perjured testimony of some, and notwithstanding the originality (sarcastically) of the proceedings of this trial. And as long as this has not been done, and you pronounce upon us the sentence of

AN APPOINTED VIGILANCE COMMITTEE,

acting as a jury, I say, you, the alleged representatives and high priests of "Law and Order," are the real and only law breakers,

AND IN THIS CASE OF THE EXTENT OF MURDER.

It is well that the people know this. And when I speak of the people I don't mean the few co-conspirators of Grinnell, the noble patricians who thrive upon the misery of the multitudes. These drones may constitute the State, they may control the State, they may have their Grinnells, their Bonfields, their hirelings! No, when I speak of the people I speak of the great mass of human bees, the working people, who unfortunately are not yet conscious of the rascalities that are perpetrated in the "name of the people,"—in their name.

The contemplated murder of eight men, whose only crime is that they have
DARED TO SPEAK THE TRUTH,

may open the eyes of these suffering millions; may wake them up. Indeed, I have noticed that our conviction has worked miracles in this direction already. The class that clamors for our lives, the good, devout Christians, have attempted in every way, through their newspapers and otherwise, to conceal the true and only issue in this case. By simply designating the defendants as "Anarchists," and picturing them as a newly discovered tribe or species of cannibals, and by inventing shocking and horrifying stories of dark conspiracies said to be planned by them—these good Christians zealously sought to keep the naked fact from the working people and other righteous parties, namely: That on the evening of May 4, 200 armed men, under the command of a notorious ruffian,

² Grinnell was the State's Attorney and prosecutor.

³ This is paraphrased from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

ATTACKED A MEETING OF PEACEABLE CITIZENS.

With what intention? With the intention of murdering them, or as many of them as they could. I refer to the testimony given by two of our witnesses. The wage-workers of this city began to object to being fleeced too much—they began to say some very true things, but they were highly disagreeable to their patrician class; they put forth—well, some very modest demands. They thought eight hours hard toil a day for scarcely two hours' pay was enough.

THIS LAWLESS RABBLE HAD TO BE SILENCED!

The only way to silence them was to frighten them, and murder those whom they looked up to as their "leaders." Yes, these foreign dogs had to be taught a lesson, so that they might never again interfere with the high-handed exploitation of their benevolent and Christian masters. Bonfield, the man who would bring a blush of shame to the managers of the Bartholomew night—Bonfield, the illustrious gentleman with a visage that would have done excellent service to Doré in portraying Dante's fiends of hell—Bonfield was the man best fitted to consummate the CONSPIRACY OF THE CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION,

of our patricians. If I had thrown that bomb, or had caused it to be thrown, or had known of it, I would not hesitate a moment to state so. It is true a number of lives were lost—many were wounded. But hundreds of lives were saved! But for that bomb, there would have been a hundred widows and hundreds of orphans where now there are few. These facts have been carefully suppressed, and we were accused and convicted of conspiracy by the real conspirators and their agents. This, your honor, is one reason why sentence should not be passed by a court of justice—if that name has any significance at all.

"But," says the State, "you have published articles on the manufacture of dynamite and bombs." Show me a daily paper in this city that has not published similar articles! I remember very distinctly a long article in the Chicago Tribune of February 23, 1885. The paper contained a description and drawings of different kinds of infernal machines and bombs. I remember this one especially, because I bought the paper on a railroad train, and had ample time to read it. But since that time the Times has often published similar articles on the subject, and some of the dynamite articles found in the Arbeiter-Zeitung were translated articles from the Times, written by Generals Molineux and Fitzjohn Porter, in which the use of dynamite bombs

AGAINST STRIKING WORKMEN

is advocated as the most effective weapon against them. May I learn why the editors of these papers have not been indicted and convicted for murder? Is it because they have advocated the use of this destructive agent only against the common rabble? I seek information. Why was Mr. Stone of the News not made a defendant in this case? In his possession was found a bomb. Besides that Mr. Stone published an article in January which gave full information regarding the manufacture of bombs. Upon this information any man could prepare a bomb ready for use at the expense of

NOT MORE THAN TEN CENTS.

The News probably has ten times the circulation of the Arbeiter-Zeitung. Is it not likely that the bomb used on May 4th was one made after the News' pattern? As long as these men are not charged with murder and convicted. I insist, your honor, that such discrimination in favor of capital is incompatible with justice, and sentence should therefore not be passed.

Grinnell's main argument against the defendants was "they were foreigners. They are not citizens." I cannot speak for others. I will only speak for myself. I have been a resident of the

State fully as long as Grinnell, and probably have been as good a citizen—at least, I should not wish to be compared with him.

Grinnell has incessantly appealed to the patriotism of the jury. To that I reply in the language of Johnson, the English literateur, “patriotism is the

LAST RESORT OF A SCOUNDREL.”

My efforts in behalf of the disinherited and disfranchised millions, my agitation in this direction, the popularization of economic teachings—in short, the education of the wage-workers, is declared “a conspiracy against society.” The word “society” is here wisely substituted for “the state” as represented by the patricians of today. It has always been the opinion of the ruling classes that

THE PEOPLE MUST BE KEPT IN IGNORANCE,

for they lose their servility, their modesty and their obedience to the powers that be, a their intelligence increases. The education of a black slave a quarter of a century ago was a criminal offense. Why? Because the intelligent slave would throw off his shackles at whatever cost. Why is the education of the working people of today looked upon by a certain class as an offense against the State? For the same reason! The State, however, wisely avoided this point in the prosecution of this case. From their testimony one is forced to conclude that we had, in our speeches and publications, preached nothing else but destruction and dynamite. The court has this morning stated that there is no ease in history like this. I have noticed, during this trial, that the gentlemen of the legal profession are not well versed in history. In all historical cases of this kind truth had to be perverted by the priests of the established power that was nearing its end.

What have we said in our speeches and publications?

We have interpreted to the people their conditions and relations in society. We have explained to them the different social phenomena and the social laws and circumstances under which they occur. We have, by way of scientific investigation, incontrovertibly proved and brought to their knowledge that the

SYSTEM OF WAGES IS THE ROOT

of the present social iniquities—iniquities so monstrous that they cry to Heaven. We have further said that the wage system, as a specific form of social development, would, by the necessity of logic, have to make room for higher forms of civilization; that the wage system must prepared the way and furnish the foundation for a social system of co-operation—that is, Socialism. That whether this or that theory, this or that scheme regarding future arrangements were accepted was not a matter of choice, but one of historical necessity, and that to us the tendency of progress seemed to be Anarchism—that is, a free society of sovereigns in which the liberty and economic equality of all would furnish an unshakable equilibrium as a foundation and condition of natural order.

It is not likely that the honorable Bonfield and Grinnell can conceive of a social order not held intact by the policeman’s club and pistol, nor of a free society without prisons, gallows, and State’s attorneys. In such a society they probably

FAIL TO FIND A PLACE FOR THEMSELVES.

And this is the reason why Anarchism is such a “pernicious and damnable doctrine?”

Grinnell has intimated to us that Anarchism was on trial. The theory of anarchism belongs to the realm of speculative philosophy. There was not a syllable said about Anarchism at the Haymarket meeting. At that meeting the very popular theme of reducing the hours of toil was discussed. But, “Anarchism is on trial!” foams Mr. Grinnell. If that is the case, your honor, very

well; you may sentence me, for I am an Anarchist. I believe with Buckle, with Paine, Jefferson, Emerson, and Spencer, and many other great thinkers of this century, that the state of castes and classes—the state where one class dominates over and lives upon the labor of another class, and calls this order—yes; I believe that this barbaric form of social organization, with its legalized plunder and murder, is doomed to die, and make room for a free society, voluntary association, or universal brotherhood, if you like. You may pronounce the sentence upon me, honorable judge, but let the world know that in A.D. 1886, in the State of Illinois, eight men were sentenced to death,

BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED IN A BETTER FUTURE;

because they had not lost their faith in the ultimate victory of liberty and justice! “You have taught the destruction of society and civilization,” says the tool and agent of the Bankers’ and Citizens’ Association, Grinnell. That man has yet to learn what civilization is. It is the old, old argument against human progress. Read the history of Greece, of Rome; read that of Venice; look over the dark pages of the church, and follow the thorny path of science. “No change! No Change! You would destroy society and civilization!” has been the cry of the ruling classes. They are so comfortably situated under the prevailing system that they naturally abhor and fear even the slightest change. Their privileges are as dear to them as life itself, and every change threatened these privileges. But civilization is a ladder whose steps are monuments of such changes! Without these social changes—all brought about against the will and the force of the ruling classes—there would be no civilization. As to the destruction of society which we have been accused of seeking, sounds this not like one of Aesop’s fables—like the cunning of the fox? We, who have jeopardized our lives to save society from the fiend—the fiend who has gripped her by the throat; who sucks her life-blood, who devours her children—we, who would heal her bleeding wounds, who would free her from the fetters you have wrought around her; from the misery you have brought upon her—we her enemies!!

Honorable Judge, the

DEMONS OF HELL WILL JOIN IN THE LAUGHTER

this irony provokes!

We have preached dynamite. Yes, we have predicted from the lessons history teaches, that the ruling classes of today would no more listen to the voice of reason than their predecessors; that they would attempt by brute force to stay the wheel of progress. Is it a lie, or was it the truth we told? Are not already the large industries of this once free country conducted under the surveillance of the police, the detectives, the military, and the sheriffs—and is this return to militancy not developing from day to day? American sovereigns—think of it—working

LIKE THE GALLY CONVICTS

under military guards! We have predicted this, and predict that soon these conditions will grow unbearable. What then? The mandate of the feudal lords of our time is slavery, starvation, and death! This has been their programme for the past years. We have said to the toilers, that science has penetrated the mystery of nature—that from Jove’s head once more

HAS SPRUNG A MINERVA—DYNAMITE!

If this declaration is synonymous with murder, why not charge those with the crime to whom we owe the invention? To charge us with an attempt to overthrow the present system on or about May 4th by force, and then establish Anarchy, is too absurd a statement, I think, even for a political office-holder to make. If Grinnell believed that we attempted such a thing, why did he not have Dr. Bluthardt make an inquiry as to our sanity? Only mad men could have planned such a brilliant

scheme, and mad people cannot be indicted or convicted of murder. If there had existed anything like a conspiracy or a pre-arrangement, does your honor believe that events would not have taken a different course than they did on that evening and later? This “conspiracy” nonsense is based upon an oration I delivered on the anniversary of Washington’s birthday at Grand Rapids, Mich., more than a year and a half ago. I had been invited by the Knights of Labor for that purpose. I dwelt upon the fact that our country was far from being what the great revolutionists of last century had intended it to be. I said that those men if they lived today would clean the Augean stables with iron brooms, and that they, too, would undoubtedly be characterized as “wild Socialists.” It is not unlikely that I said

WASHINGTON WOULD HAVE BEEN HANGED

for treason if the revolution had failed. Grinnell made this “sacrilegious remark” his main arrow against me. Why? Because he intended to inveigh the know-nothing spirit against me. Why? But who will deny their correctness of the statement? That I should have compared myself with Washington, is a base lie. But if I had, would that be murder? I may have told that individual who appeared here as a witness that the workingmen should procure arms, as force would in all probability be the ultimate ratio; and that in Chicago there were so and so many armed, but I certainly did not say that we proposed to “inaugurate the social revolution.” And let me say here: Revolutions are no more made than earthquakes and cyclones. Revolutions are the effect of certain causes and conditions. I have made social philosophy a specific study for more than ten years, and I could not have given vent to such nonsense! I do believe, however, that the revolution is near at hand—in fact, it is upon us. But is the physician responsible for the death of the patient because he foretold that death? If anyone is to be blamed for the coming revolution it is the ruling class who steadily refused to make concessions as reforms became necessary; who maintain that they can call a halt to progress, and dictate a stand-still to the eternal forces, of which they themselves are but the whimsical creation.

The position generally taken in this case is that we are morally responsible for the police riot on May 4th. Four or five years ago I sat in this very court room as a witness. The working men had been trying to obtain redress in a lawful manner. They had voted, and among others, had elected their Aldermanic, candidate from the Fourteenth Ward. But the street car company did not like that man. And two of the three election judges of one precinct, knowing this, took the ballot box to their home and “corrected” the election returns, so as to cheat the constituents of the elected candidate of their rightful representative, and give the representation to

THE BENEVOLENT STREET CAR MONOPOLY.

The workingmen spent \$1,500 in the prosecution of the perpetrators of this crime. The proof against them was so overwhelming that they confessed to having falsified the returns and forged the official documents. Judge Gardner, who was presiding in this court, acquitted them, stating that “that act had apparently not been prompted by criminal intent.” I will make no comment. But when we approach the field of moral responsibility, it has an immense scope! Every man who has in the past assisted in thwarting the efforts of those seeking reform is responsible for the existence of the revolutionists in this city today! Those, however, who have sought to bring about reforms must be exempted from the responsibility—and to these I belong.

If the verdict is based upon the assumption of moral responsibility, your honor, I give this as a reason why sentence should not be passed.

If the opinion of the court given this morning is good law, then there is no person in this country who could not lawfully be hanged. I vouch that, upon the very laws you have read,

there is no person in this courtroom now who could not be “fairly, impartially and lawfully” hanged! Fouché, Napoleon’s right bower, once said to his master: “Give me a line that any one man has ever written, and I will bring him to the scaffold.” And this court has done essentially the same. Upon that law every person in this country can be indicted for conspiracy, and, as the case may be, for murder. Every member of a trade union, Knight of Labor, or any other labor organization, can than be convicted of conspiracy, and in cases of violence, for which they may not be responsible at all, of murder, as we have been. This precedent once established, and you force the masses who are now agitating in a peaceable way into open rebellion! You thereby shut off the last safety valve—and the blood which will be shed, the blood of the innocent—it will come upon your heads!

“Seven policemen have died,” said Grinnell, suggestively winking at the jury. You want a life for a life, and have convicted an equal number of men, of whom it cannot be truthfully said that they had anything whatsoever to do with the killing of Bonfield’s victims. The very same principle of jurisprudence we find among various savage tribes. Injuries among them are equalized, so to speak. The Chinooks and the Arabs, for instance, would demand the life of an enemy for every death that they had suffered at their enemy’s hands. They were not particular in regard to the persons, just so long as they had a life for a life. This principle also prevails today among the natives of the Sandwich Islands. If we are to be hanged on this principle than let us know it, and let the world know what a

CIVILIZED AND CHRISTIAN COUNTRY,

it is which the Goulds, the Vanderbilts, the Stanfords, the Fields, Armours,⁴ and other local money hamsters have come to the rescue of liberty and justice!

Grinnell has repeatedly stated that our country is an enlightened country, (Sarcastically.) The verdict fully corroborates the assertion! The verdict against us is

THE ANATHEMA OF THE WEALTHY CLASSES

over their despoiled victims—the vast army of wage workers and farmers. If your honor would not have these people believe this; if you would not have them believe that we have once more arrived at the Spartan Senate, the Athenian Areopagus, the Venetian Council of Ten, etc., then sentence should not be pronounced. But, if you think that by hanging us, you can stamp out the labor movement—the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil and live in want and misery—the wage slaves—except salvation—if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here we will tread upon a spark, but there, and there, and behind you and in front of you, and everywhere, flames will blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. you cannot put it out.

THE GROUND IS ON FIRE

upon which you stand. You can’t understand it. You don’t believe in magical arts, as your grandfathers did, who burned witches at the stake, but you do believe in conspiracies; you believe that all these occurrences of late are the work of conspirators! You resemble the child that is looking for his picture behind the mirror. What you see, and what you try to grasp is nothing but the deceptive reflex of the stings of your bad conscience. You want to “stamp out the conspirators”—the “agitators?” Ah, stamp out every factory lord who has grown wealthy upon the unpaid labor of his employees. Stamp out every landlord who has amassed fortunes from the rent of overburdened workingmen and farmers. stamp out every machine that is revolutionizing industry and agriculture, that intensifies the production, ruins the producer, that increases the

⁴ These were the names of various wealthy industrialists during the Gilded Age.

national wealth, while the creator of all these things stands amidst them, tantalized with hunger! Stamp out the railroads, the telegraph, the telephone, steam and yourselves—for

EVERYTHING BREATHES THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT.

You, gentlemen, are the revolutionists! You rebel against the effects of social conditions which have tossed you, by the fair hand of Fortune, into a magnificent paradise. Without inquiring, you imagine that no one else has a right in that place. You insist that you are the chosen ones, the sole proprietors. The forces that tossed you into the paradise, the industrial forces, are still at work. They are growing more active and intense from day to day. Their tendency is to elevate all mankind to the same level, to have all humanity

SHARE IN THE PARADISE YOU NOW MONOPOLIZE.

You, in your blindness, think you can stop the tidal wave of civilization and human emancipation by placing a few policemen, a few gatling guns, and some regiments of militia on the shore—you think you can frighten the rising waves back into the unfathomable depths, whence they have arisen, by erecting a few gallows in the perspective. You, who oppose the natural course of things, you are the real revolutionists. You and you alone are the conspirators and destructionists!

Said the court yesterday, in referring to the Board of Trade demonstration: “These men started out with the express purpose of sacking the Board of Trade building.” While I can’t see what sense there would have been in such an undertaking, and while I know that the said demonstration was arranged simply as a means of propaganda against the system that legalizes the respectable business carried on there, I will assume that the three thousand workmen who marched in that procession really intended to sack the building. In this case they would have differed from the respectable Board of Trade men only in this—that they sought to recover property in an unlawful way, while the others

SACK THE ENTIRE COUNTRY

lawfully and unlawfully—this being their highly respectable profession. This court of “justice and equity” proclaims the principle that when two persons do the same thing, it is not the same thing. I thank the court for this confession. It contains all that we have taught and which we are to be hanged, in a nut shell! Theft is a respectable profession when practiced by the privileged class. It is a felony when resorted to in self preservation by the other class. Rapine and pillage are the order of a certain class of gentlemen who find this mode of earning a livelihood easier and preferable to honest labor—this is the kind of order we have attempted, and are now trying, and will try as long as we live to do away with. Look upon the economic battle fields! Behold the carnage and plunder of the Christian patricians! Accompany me to the quarters of the wealth-creators in this city. Go with me to the half-starved miners of Hocking Valley. Look at the pariahs in the Monongahela Valley, and many other mining districts in this country, or pass along the railroads of that great and most orderly and law-abiding citizen, Jay Gould. And then tell me whether this order has in it any moral principle for which it should be preserved. I say that the

PRESERVATION OF SUCH AN ORDER IS CRIMINAL—

is murderous. It means the preservation of the systematic destruction of children and women in factories. It means the preservation of enforced idleness of large armies of men, and their degradation. It means the preservation of intemperance, and sexual as well as intellectual prostitution. It means the preservation of misery, want, and servility on one hand, and the dangerous accumulation of spoils, idleness, voluptuousness and tyranny on the other. It means the

PRESERVATION OF VICE IN EVERY FORM.

And last but not least, it means the preservation of the class struggle, of strikes, riots and bloodshed. That is your “order,” gentlemen; Yes, and it is worthy of you to be the champions of such an order. You are eminently fitted for that role. You have my compliments!

Grinnell spoke of Victor Hugo. I need not repeat myself what he said, but will answer him in the language of one of our German philosophers: “Our Bourgeoisie erects monuments in honor of the memory of the classics. If they had read them they would burn them!” Why, amongst the articles read here from the Arbeiter-Zeitung, put in evidence by the State, by which they intend to convince the jury of the dangerous character of the accused anarchists, is an extract from Goethe’s Faust,

“Es erben sich Gesetzt und Rechte,
We eine ew’ge Krankheit fort,” etc.

(“Laws and class privileges are transmitted like an hereditary disease.”) And Mr. Ingham in his speech told the Christian jurors that our comrades, the Paris communists, had in 1871, dethroned God, the Almighty, and had put up in his place a low prostitute. The effect was marvelous! The GOOD CHRISTIANS WERE SHOCKED.

I wish your honor would inform the learned gentlemen that the episode related occurred in Paris nearly a century ago, and that the sacrilegious perpetrators were the contemporaries of the founders of the Republic—and among them was Thomas Paine.⁵ Nor was the woman a prostitute, but a good citizenne de Paris, who served on that occasion simply as an allegory of the goddess of reason.

Referring to Most’s letter, read here, Mr. Ingham said: “They,” meaning Most and myself, “They might have destroyed thousands of innocent lives in the Hocking Valley with that dynamite.” I have said all I know about the letter on the witness stand, but will add that two years ago I went through the Hocking Valley as a correspondent. While there I saw hundreds of lives in the process of slow destruction, gradual destruction. There was no dynamite, nor were they Anarchists who did that diabolical work. It was the work of a party of

HIGHLY RESPECTABLE MONOPOLISTS,

law-abiding citizens, if you please. It is needless to say the murderers were never indicted. The press had little to say, and the State of Ohio assisted them. What a terror it would have created if the victims of this diabolical plot had resented and blown some of those respectable cut-throats to atoms. When, in East St. Louis, Jay Gould’s hirelings, “the men of grit,” shot down in cold blood and killed six inoffensive workingmen and women, there was little said, and the grand jury refused to indict the gentlemen. It was the same way in Chicago, Milwaukee, and other places. A Chicago furniture manufacturer shot down and seriously wounded two striking workingmen last spring. He was held over to the grand jury. The grand jury

REFUSED TO INDICT THE GENTLEMAN.

But when, on one occasion, a workingman in self defense resisted the murderous attempt of the police and threw a bomb, and for once blood flowed on the other side, then a terrific howl went up from the land: “Conspiracy has attacked vested rights!” And eight victims are demanded for it. There has been much said about the public sentiment. There has been much said about the public clamor. Why, it is a fact, that no citizen dared express another opinion than that prescribed by the authorities of the State, for if one had done otherwise, he would have been locked up; he

⁵ Spies is referring to the French Revolution and the American Revolution.

might have been sent to the gallows to swing, as they will have the pleasure of doing with us, if the decree of our “honorably court” is consummated.

“These men,” Grinnell said repeatedly, “have no principles; they are common murderers, assassins, robbers,” etc. I admit that our aspirations and objects are

INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO UNPRINCIPLED RUFFIANS,

but surely for this we are not to be blamed. The assertion, if I mistake not, was based on the ground that we sought to destroy property. Whether this perversion of facts was intentional, I know not. but in justification of our doctrines I will say that the assertion is an infamous falsehood. Articles have been read here from the Arbeiter-Zeitung and Alarm to show the dangerous characters of the defendants. the files of the Arbeiter-Zeitung and Alarm have been searched for the past years. Those articles which generally commented upon some atrocity committed by the authorities upon striking workingmen were picked out and read to you. Other articles were not read to the court. Other articles were not what was wanted. The State’s Attorney upon those articles (who well know that he tells a falsehood when he says it), asserts that “these men have no principle.”

A few weeks before I was arrested and charged with the crime for which I have been convicted, I was invited by the clergymen of the Congregational Church to lecture upon

THE SUBJECT OF SOCIALISM,

and debate with them. This took place at the Grand Pacific Hotel. And so that it cannot be said that after I have been convicted I have put together some principles to justify my action, I will read what I said then— Capt. Black: “Give the date of the paper.” Mr. Spies: “January 9, 1886.” Capt. Black: “What paper, the Alarm?” Mr. Spies: “The Alarm.” When I was asked upon that occasion what Socialism was, I said this:⁶

“Socialism is simply a resume of the phenomena of the social life of the past and present traced to their fundamental causes, and brought into logical connection with one another. It rests upon the established fact that the economic conditions and institutions of a people form the ground work of all their social conditions, of their ideas—aye, even of their religion, and further, that all changes of economic conditions, every step in advance, arises from the struggles between the dominating and dominated class in different ages. You, gentlemen, cannot place yourselves at this standpoint of speculative science; your profession demands that you occupy the opposite position, that which professes acquaintance with things as they actually exist, but which presumes a thorough understanding of matters which to ordinary mortals are entirely incomprehensible. it is for this reason that you cannot become Socialists (cries of “Oh! oh!”). lest you should be unable to exactly grasp my meaning, however, I will now state the matter a little more plainly. It cannot be unknown to you that in the course of this century there have appeared an infinite number of inventions and discoveries, which have brought about great, aye, astonishing changes in the production of the necessities and comforts of life. The work of machines has, to a great extent, replaced that of men.

“Machinery involves a great accumulation of power, and always a greater division of labor in consequence.

“The advantages resulting from this centralization of production were of such a nature as to cause its still further extension, and from this concentration of the means of labor and of the

⁶ Spies is quoting from his own writings in the following quotes.

operations of laborers, while the old system of distribution was (and is) retained, arose those improper conditions which ail society today.

“The means of production thus came into the hands of an ever decreasing number, while the actual producers, through the introduction of machinery, deprived of the opportunity to toil, and being at the same time disinherited of the bounties of nature, were consigned to pauperism, vagabondage—the so-called crime and prostitution—all these evils which you gentlemen would like to exorcise with your little prayer-book.

“The Socialists award your efforts a jocular rather than a serious attention—[symptoms of uneasiness]—otherwise, pray let us know how much you have accomplished so far by your moral lecturing towards ameliorating the condition of those wretched beings who through bitter want have been driven to crime and desperation? [Here several gentlemen sprang to their feet, exclaiming, ‘We have done a great deal in some directions!’] Aye, in some cases you have perhaps given a few alms; but what influence has this, if I may ask, had upon societary conditions, or in affecting any change in the same? Nothing; absolutely nothing. You may as well admit it, gentlemen, for you cannot point me out a single instance.

“Very well. Those proletarians doomed to misery and hunger through the labor-saving of our centralized production, whose number in this country we estimate at about a million and a half, is it likely that they and the thousands who are daily joining their ranks, and the millions who are toiling for a miserable pittance, will suffer peacefully and with Christian resignation their destruction at the hand of their thievish and murderous, albeit very Christian wage-masters? They will defend themselves. It will come to a fight.

“The necessity of common ownership in the means of toil will be realized, and the era of socialism, of universal co-operation begins. The dispossessing of the usurping classes—the socialization of these possessions—and the universal co-operation of toil, not for speculative purposes, but for the satisfaction of the demands which we make upon life; in short co-operative labor for the purpose of continuing life and of enjoying it—this in general outlines, is Socialism. This is not, however, as you might suppose, a mere “beautifully conceived plan,” the realization of which would be well worth striving for if it could only be brought about. No; this socialization of the means of production, of the machinery of commerce, of the land and earth, etc., is not only something desirable, but has become an imperative necessity there we always find that the next step was the doing away with that necessity by the supplying of the logical want.

“Our large factories and mines, and the machinery of exchange and transportation, apart from every other consideration, have become too vast for private control. Individuals can no longer monopolize them.

“Everywhere, wherever we cast our eyes, we find forced upon our attention the unnatural and injurious effects of unregulated private production. We see how one man, or a number of men, have not only brought into the embrace of their private ownership a few inventions in technical lines, but have also confiscated for their exclusive advantage all natural powers, such as water, steam, and electricity. Every fresh invention, every discovery belongs to them. The world exists for them only. That they destroy their fellow-beings right and left they little care. That, by their machinery, they even work the bodies of little children into gold pieces they hold to be an especially good work and a genuine Christian act. They murder, as we have said, little children and women by hard labor, while they let strong men go hungry for lack of work.

“People ask themselves how such things are possible, and the answer is that the competitive system is the cause of it. The thought of a co-operative, social, rational, and well-regulated system

of management irresistibly impresses the observer. The advantages of such a system are of such a convincing kind, so patent to observation—and where could they be any other way out of it? According to physical laws a body always moves itself, consciously or unconsciously, along the line of least resistance. So does a society as a whole. The path to co-operative labor and distribution is leveled by the concentration of the means of labor under the private capitalistic system. We are already moving right in that track. We cannot retreat even if we would. The force of circumstances drives us on to Socialism.

“And now, Mr. S., won’t you tell us how you are going to carry out the expropriation of the possessing classes?” asked Rev. Dr. Scudder.

“The answer is in the thing itself. The key is furnished by the storms raging through the industrial life of the present. You see how penuriously the owners of the factories, of the mines, cling to their privileges, and will not yield the breadth of an inch. On the other hand, you see the half-starved proletarians driven to the verge of violence.’

“So your remedy would be violence?”

“Remedy? Well, I should like it better if it could be done without violence, but you, gentlemen, and the class you represent, take care that it cannot be accomplished otherwise. Let us suppose that the workingmen of today go to their employers, and say to them: ‘Listen! Your administration of affairs don’t suit us any more; it leads to disastrous consequences. While one part of us are worked to death, the others, out of employment, are starved to death; little children are ground to death in the factories, while strong, vigorous men remain idle; the masses live in misery while a small class of respectables enjoy luxury and wealth; all this is the result of your maladministration, which will bring misfortune even to yourselves; step down and out now; let us have your property, which is nothing but unpaid labor; we shall take this thing in our hands now; we shall administrate matters satisfactorily, and regulate the institutions of society; voluntarily we shall pay you a life-long pension. Now, do you think the ‘bosses’ would accept this proposition? You certainly don’t believe it. Therefore force will have to decide—or do you know of any other way?’

“So you are organizing a revolution?”

“It was shortly before my arrest, and I answered: “Such things are hard to organize. A revolution is a sudden upwelling—a convulsion of the fevered masses of society.

“We are preparing society for that, and insist upon it that workingmen should arm themselves and keep ready for the struggle. The better they are armed the easier will the battle be, and the less the bloodshed.

“What would be the order of things in the new society?”

“I must decline to answer this question, as it is, till now, a mere matter of speculation. The organization of labor on a co-operative basis offers no difficulties. The large establishments of today might be used as patterns. Those who will have to solve these questions will expediently do it, instead of working according to our prescriptions (if we should make anything of the kind); they will be directed by the circumstances and conditions of the time, and these are beyond our horizon. About this you needn’t trouble yourselves.

“But, friend, don’t you think that about a week after the division, the provident will have all, while the spendthrift will have nothing?”

“The question is out of order,’ interfered the Chairman; ‘there was not said anything about division.’

“Prof. Wilcox: ‘Don’t you think the introduction of Socialism will destroy all individuality?’

“How can anything be destroyed which does not exist? In our times there is no individuality; that only can be developed under Socialism, when mankind will be independent economically. Where do you meet today with real individuality? Look at yourselves, gentlemen! You don’t dare to give utterance to any subjective opinion which might not suit the feelings of your bread-givers and customers. You are hypocrites [murmurs and indignation]; every business man is a hypocrite. Everywhere is mockery, servility, lie and fraud. And the laborers! There you feign anxiety about their individuality; about the individuality of a class that has been degraded to machines—used each day for ten or twelve hours as appendages of the lifeless machines! About their individuality you are anxious!”

Does that sound as though I had at that time, as has been imputed to me, organized a revolution—a so-called social revolution, which was to occur on or about the 1st of May to establish anarchy in place of our present “ideal order?” I guess not.

So socialism does not mean the destruction of society. Socialism is a constructive and not a destructive science. While capitalism expropriates the masses for the benefit of the privileged class; while capitalism is that school of economics which teaches how one can live upon the labor (i.e., property) of the other; Socialism teaches how all may possess property, and further teaches that every man must work honestly for his own living, and not be playing the “respectable board of trade man,” or any other highly (?) respectable business man or banker, such as appeared here as talesmen in the jurors’ box, with the fixed opinion that we ought to be hanged. Indeed, I believe they have that opinion! Socialism, in short, seeks to establish

A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM OF CO-OPERATION

and to render accessible to each and every member of the human family the achievements and benefits of civilization, which, under capitalism, are being monopolized by a privileged class and employed, not as they should be, for the common good of all, but for the brutish gratification of an avaricious class. Under capitalism the great inventions of the past, far from being a blessing for mankind, have been turned into a curse! Under Socialism the prophecy of the Greek poet, Antiporas, would be fulfilled, who, at the invention of the first water-mill, exclaimed: “This is the emancipator of male and female slaves”; and likewise the prediction of Aristotle, who said: “When, at some future age, every tool, upon command or by predestination, will perform its work as the artworks of Daedalus did, which moved by themselves, or like the three feet of Hephaestus, which went to their sacred work instinctively, when thus the weaver shuttles will weave by themselves, then we shall

NO LONGER REQUIRE MASTERS AND SLAVES.”

Socialism says this time has come, and can you deny it? You say: “Oh, these heathens, what did they know?” True! They knew nothing of political economy: they knew nothing of Christendom. They failed to conceive how nicely these man-emancipating machines could be employed to lengthen the hours of toil and to intensify the burdens of the slaves. These heathens, yes, they excused the slavery of one on the ground that thereby another would be afforded the opportunity of human development. But to preach the slavery of the masses in order that a few rude and arrogant parvenues might become “eminent manufacturers,” “extensive packing-house owners,” or “influential shoe-black dealers,” to do this they lacked that specific Christian organ.

Socialism teaches that the machines, the means of transportation and communication are the result of the combined efforts of society, past and present, and that they are therefore rightfully the indivisible property of society, just the same as the soil and the mines and all natural gifts should be. this declaration implies that those who have appropriated this wealth wrongfully,

though lawfully, shall be expropriated by society. The expropriation of the masses by the monopolists has reached such a degree that the expropriation of the expropriateurs has become an imperative necessity, an act of social self-preservation.

SOCIETY WILL RECLAIM ITS OWN,

even though you erect a gibbet on every street corner. And Anarchism, this terrible “ism,” deduces that under a co-operative organization of society, under economic equality and individual independence, the “State”—the political State—will pass into barbaric antiquity. And we will be where all are free, where there are no longer masters and servants, where intellect stands for brute force, there will no longer be any use for the policemen and militia to preserve the so-called “peace and order”—the order that the Russian General speaks of when he telegraphed to the Czar after he had massacred half of Warsaw, “Peace reigns in Warsaw.”

Anarchism does not mean bloodshed; does not mean robbery, arson, etc. These monstrosities are, on the contrary, the characteristic features of capitalism. Anarchism means peace and tranquillity to all. Anarchism, or socialism, means the reorganization of society upon scientific principles and the abolition of causes which produce vice and crime. Capitalism first produces these social diseases and then seeks to cure them by punishment.

The court has had a great deal to say about the incendiary character of the articles read from the Arbeiter-Zeitung. Let me read to you an editorial which appeared in the Fond du Lac Commonwealth, in October, 1886, a Republican paper. If I am not mistaken the court is Republican, too.

“To arms, Republicans! Work in every town in Wisconsin for men not afraid of firearms, blood or dead bodies, to preserve peace [that is the ‘peace’ I have been speaking of] and quiet; avoid a conflict of parties to prevent the administration of public affairs from falling into the hands of such obnoxious men as James G. Jenkins. Every Republican in Wisconsin should go armed to the polls on next election day. The grain-stacks, houses and barns of active Democrats should be burned; their children burned and wives outraged, that they may understand that the Republican party is the one which is bound to rule, and the one which they should vote for, to keep their vile carcasses away from the polls. If they still persist in going to the polls, and persist in voting for Jenkins, meet them on the road, in the bush, on the hill, or anywhere, and shoot every one of these base cowards and agitators. If they are too strong in any locality, and succeed in putting their opposition votes into the ballot box, break open the box and tear in shreds their discord-breathing ballots. Burn them. This is the time for effective work. Yellow fever will not catch among Morrison Democrats; so we must use less noisy and more effective means. The agitators must be put down, and whoever opposes us does so at his peril. Republicans, be at the polls in accordance with the above directions, and don’t stop for a little blood. That which makes the solid South will make a solid North.”

What does your honor say to these utterances of a “law and order” organ—a Republican organ? How does the Arbeiter-Zeitung compare with this?

The book of Johann Most, which was introduced in court, I have never read, and I admit that passages were read here that are repulsive—that must be repulsive to any person who has a heart. But I call your attention to the fact that these passages have been translated from a publication of Andrieux, the ex-prefect of police, in Paris, by an exponent of your order! Have the representatives of your order ever stopped at the sacrifice of human blood? Never!

It has been charged that we (the eight here) constituted a conspiracy. I would reply to that that my friend Ling I had seen but twice at meetings of the Central Labor Union, where I went

as a reporter; had seen him but twice before I was arrested. Never spoke to him. Engle I have not been on speaking terms with for at least a year. And Fischer, my lieutenant, used to go round and
MAKE SPEECHES AGAINST ME.

So much for that.

You honor has said this morning, “we must learn their objects from what they have said and written,” and in pursuance thereof the court has read a number of articles.

Now, if I had as much power as the court, and were a law-abiding citizen, I would certainly have the court indicted for some remarks made during this trial. I will say that if I had not been an anarchist at the beginning of this trial I would be one now. I quote the exact language of the court on one occasion. “It does not necessarily follow that all laws are foolish and bad because a good many of them are so.” That is treason, sir! if we are to believe the court and the State’s Attorney. But, aside from that, I cannot see how we shall distinguish the good from the bad laws. Am I to judge of that? No; I am not. But if I disobey a bad law, and am brought before a bad judge, I undoubtedly would be convicted.

In regard to a report in the Arbeiter-Zeitung, also read this morning, the report of the Board of Trade demonstration, I would say—and this is the only defense, the only word I have to say in my own defense, is, that I did not know of that article until I saw it in the paper, and the man who wrote it, wrote it rather as a reply to some slurs in the morning papers. He was discharged. The language used in that article would never have been tolerated if I had seen it.

Now, if we cannot be directly implicated with this affair, connected with the throwing of the bomb, where is the law that says, “that these men shall be picked out to suffer? Show me that law if you have it! If the position of the court is correct, then half of this city—half of the population of this city—ought to be hanged, because they are responsible the same as we are for that act on May 4th. And if not half of the population of Chicago is hanged, then show me the law that says, “Eight men shall be picked out and hanged as scapegoats!” You have no good law. Your decision, your verdict, our conviction is nothing but an arbitrary will of this lawless court. It is true there is no precedent in jurisprudence in this case! It is true we have called upon the people to arm themselves. It is true that we have told them time and again that the great day of change was coming. It was not our desire to have bloodshed. We are not beasts. We would not be socialists if we were beasts. It is because of our sensitiveness that we have gone into this movement for the emancipation of the oppressed and suffering. It is true we have called upon the people to arm and

PREPARE FOR THE STORMY TIMES BEFORE US.

This seems to be the ground upon which the verdict is to be sustained. “BUT WHEN A LONG TRAIN OF ABUSES AND USURPATIONS PURSUING INVARIABLY THE SAME OBJECT EVINCES A DESIGN TO REDUCE THE PEOPLE UNDER ABSOLUTE DESPOTISM, IT IS THEIR RIGHT, IT IS THEIR DUTY, TO THROW OFF SUCH GOVERNMENT AND PROVIDE NEW GUARDS FOR THEIR FUTURE SAFETY.” This is a quotation from the “Declaration of Independence.” Have we broken any laws by showing to the people how these abuses, that have occurred for the last twenty years, are invariably pursuing one object, viz: to establish an oligarchy in this country as strong and powerful and monstrous as never before has existed in any country? I can well understand why that man Grinnell did not urge upon the grand jury to charge us with treason. I can well understand it. You cannot try and convict a man for treason

WHO HAS UPHELD THE CONSTITUTION

against those who try to trample it under their feet. It would not have been as easy a job to do that, Mr. Grinnell, as to charge “these men” with murder.

Now, these are my ideas. They constitute a part of myself. I cannot divest myself of the, nor would I, if I could. And if you think that you can crush out these ideas that are gaining ground more and more every day, if you think you can crush them out by sending us to the gallows—if you would once more have a people suffer the penalty of death because they dared to tell the truth—and I defy you to show us where we have told a lie—I say, if death is the penalty for proclaiming truth, then I will proudly and defiantly pay the costly price! *Truth crucified in Socrates, in Christ, in Giordano Bruno, in Huss, Galileo still lives—they and others whose number is legion have preceded us on this path. We are ready to follow!*

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August Spies
Address of August Spies
1885

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After the Haymarket Riot, August Spies was arrested for alleged (yet never proven) involvement in the bombing at the event. Spies gave this address during his trial on October 7, 1885, which ended with him being sentenced to death. Before he died, Spies said "There will be a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today."

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