

Defense Speech

Clement Duval

While I do not recognize your right to pose to me the questions that you have, I have responded to you as the accused.

Now, you are the ones that I am accusing. I do not pretend to defend myself. To what end would this serve me, in front of those as well armed as you, having soldiers, cannons, police, and finally an army of mercenaries as your henchmen?

Let's be logical, you are in power, taking advantage of it, and if you still need the head of yet another anarchist, take it, and when our day comes we will take this into account, and I have the firm hope that on that day the anarchists will rise to the occasion. They will be without pity, because never will they reach the number of your victims.

It is not only you who I am addressing, but to all of this selfish, cruel, corrupt society, where on one side we see an orgy and on the other misery!

You have accused me of theft, as if a worker that has nothing could be a thief.

No, theft exists only in the exploitation of man by man, in a word by those who live at the expense of the working class. It was not a theft that I committed, but a just restitution made in the name of humanity, this money was to serve for making revolutionary propaganda, through writing and by the deed. To make newspapers and leaflets to show people the truth; it has been a long time that they have been deceived. To show the cure to those who are ill.

I busy myself with the chemistry and prepare what is needed for the day of battle, the day when the workers, conscious, will leave their torpor, their slump. Because it is time that this diabolic machination of the old world disappear, to give place to institutions where all will find a fate that is more fair, which does not exist but within anarchist communism.

Because anarchy is the negation of all authority.

And anarchy is the biggest social wound, because man is not free, and one must become free to do all that one wants, as long as one does not infringe upon the liberty of their fellow- of then one would become a despot in turn.

In communism, man gives to society according to his skills and strengths, and should receive according to his needs. Men group themselves, find each other according to their character, their skills, their affinities, taking as an example the group which functions the best, away from vanity, foolish pride, not seeking to do better than one's comrade for one can do better for one's self.

Out of this will come the useful masterpieces, people's intelligence no longer reduced to nothing but capital, because men would be able to evolve freely, no longer under the despotic yoke of authority, of individual property. And these groups can mutually exchange their products, unhindered.

Learning, and feeling good about governing themselves, they will federate and will be nothing more than a big family of workers associated together for the happiness of all - one for all, all for one - knowing only a single law: the law of solidarity and reciprocity.

No more gold, base metal for which I am here and which I despise. Base metal, the cause of all the evils and vices that afflict humanity. Base metal, with which men's conscience is bought!

With anarchist communism, there is no more exploitation of man by man, no more of these managers of sweat, no more salesmen with a mercantile spirit, rapacious, selfish, poisoning, falsifying their products and their commodities, thereby bringing the degradation of mankind.

You cannot deny this, because you see this all the way to the toy salesmen, who already poison with these toys the poor little creatures who are barely born.

And these factories, where they play with the workers lives with an unparalleled shamelessness, like in the factories of white lead where in only a few months the workers find themselves paralyzed and soon dead, or in the tinsmiths who in little time become bald, crippled, weakened in the bones and die in agony!

There are scientists who know that they can replace these unhealthy products with innocuous ones. The doctors who see these unfortunates twist in such agony and who leave things to continue, they allow these crimes against humanity to happen. It is even better, they decorate the heads of the factories, and they award them honorary awards in memory of the service they have given to industry and humanity.

And how many of these unhealthy industries are there? The number would be too large to count them all, not to mention the foul and unhealthy capitalist prisons where the worker, imprisoned for ten or twelve hours is obligated, for the sake of conserving his family's bread, to incur the vexations, the humiliation of an insolent

convict, missing only the whip for us all to recall the heyday of ancient slavery and medieval serfdom.

And the unfortunate miners, imprisoned five or six hundred feet underground, seeing the light of day no more than once a week and when, tired of so much misery and suffering, they lift their heads to reclaim their right to sunlight and to the banquet of life: quickly the army is in the country side at the service of the exploiters, and we shoot this scoundrel! The proof doesn't default.

And the exploitation of man by man is nothing compared to that experienced by women. Nature is already thankless in this regard, to make them sick 15 days of the month, but we hardly take this into account: flesh of profit, flesh for fun, this is the fate of women. How many young girls arrive from the countryside, full of strength and health, only to be enclosed in the workshops, in rooms where there is room for four and they are fifteen, twenty, without air, breathing nothing but pollution: hardships they are forced to self-impose. By six months they are anemic. From there the sickness, weakness, and dislike of work that is not even sufficient to meet their needs drives these unfortunates to prostitution.

What does society do for these victims? It rejects them from her breast, like the leper, puts them on the map, enrolls them with the police and makes informers of their lovers.

And do you think the workers, with noble and generous sentiments, can see this picture of the human life unfurling constantly before their eyes without being revolted? He who feels all these effects, who is constantly a victim of them, morally, physically, and materially: he who is taken at twenty years old to pay his taxes in blood, cannon fodder to defend the property and privileges of his masters: and if he returns from this butchery, he returns maimed or with a sickness that renders him half crippled, making him go from hospital to hospital serving therefore as experimental flesh for these messieurs of science. I know what I speak of, I who have returned from the carnage with two wounds and rheumatism, a sickness that has given me four years in the hospital and which prevents me from working six months of the year. As an incentive, if you do not have the courage to give them my head as they ask, I will die in prison.

And these crimes are committed in broad daylight, after being plotted in the corridors of the government, under the influence of a clique, or the caprice of a woman, while shouting over the rooftops: The people are sovereign, The Nation is sovereign, and under the buzz words of patronage - Glory, Honor, Homeland, as if there were several homelands between all beings living on the same planet.

No! The anarchists have but one party, and that is humanity.

It is also, in the name of civilization that exists these distant expeditions where thousands of men are killed with a savage ferocity. It is in the name of civilization that we plunder, that we burn, that we massacre an entire people who demand

nothing [more] than to live peacefully in their homes. And these crimes are committed with impunity because the law doesn't cover this type of theft and armed robbery, au contraire: We award medals to those who have led all this carnage, medals to the mercenaries who have taken part, in memory of their good deeds, and these unconscious ones are proud to wear this insignia which is nothing but a diploma of assassination.

But on the other hand, the law severely punishes the worker to whom society refuses the right to exist and who has the courage to take what is necessary which he lacks, where there is superfluous amounts. Oh! And then this one is treated like a thief, brought before the court and finally returns to end his days in prison.

Voilà! The logic of our current society.

Ah well, this is the crime that I am here for: for not recognizing the right of these people to die of plenty while the producers, the creators of all social wealth, starve. Yes, I am the enemy of individual property and it has been a long time that I have said, along with Proudhon, that property is theft.

In effect, how does one acquire property, if not through theft, by exploiting one's fellows, giving three francs to the exploited for a job which will bring back ten for the exploiter? And the little exploiters don't do it any differently. Evidence: I have seen my companion do work as the second hand, two little detached pieces of lace and pearls, for which she was paid seven and a half centimes a piece. Fifteen days later, doing the same work as the first hand, he was paid fifty five centimes a piece.

So do you think that a conscious worker could be so stupid that one the day to pay the rent, to give back to the same exploiter-owner a part of his salary which had been given to him? And he will see his wife and children forced to deprive themselves of things most necessary for life, while the idle, with this money, goes to the stock exchange or somewhere else to speculate, play the market on the misery of the people, or wallow in some fashionable boudoir in the arms of an unwell girl, who to live is forced to give her flesh to others for pleasure, despite the disgust that it inspires in her.

As I do not want myself to be made an accomplice of the likes of these dishonourables, this is why I do not pay rent (for which you reproach me), not wanting myself to be robbed by this thief, this vulture that we call an owner, and this is why I had received bad references in the different areas that I have lived. Good references are only given for the vile and the groveling, for those who have no backbone.

Because the law is in all things the accomplices of those who own, the throw away the anathema at the workers who lift their heads proudly, who retain their dignity by revolting against abuse, injustices, against the monsters who make up the owning class.

But, it has been a long time since I have reckoned with anything but my conscience, mocking the fools and the wicked, feeling certain that I have the esteem of men of heart who have known me closely. This is why I am telling you: you are not condemning me as a thief, but as a conscious worker, who does not consider oneself to be a beast of burden, taxable and thanklessly exploited, and who recognizes the undeniable right that nature gives to all human beings: the right to existence. And if society refuses us this right, we must take it with unshaking hands (which would be a cowardice in a society where all abounds, where everything is in abundance, where what should be a source of well being is nothing more than a source of misery)... Why? Because everything is monopolized by a handful of idlers who burst from indigestion while the workers are continually searching for a loaf of bread.

No! I am not a robber but one who has been robbed, someone who brings justice, who says that everything belongs to everyone, and that it is this clear logic of the anarchist idea, which makes your legs tremble.

No, I am not a thief but a sincere revolutionary, who has the courage of his convictions and who is devoted to his cause. Within current society, [where] money is the nerve of war, I would do all that is within my power to procure it to serve this noble and just cause which would purge humanity of all of the tyrannies, the persecutions that it has suffered so cruelly.

Ah! I have only one regret, which is to have fallen too early into your hands, this preventing me from satisfying an implacable hatred, a thirst for vengeance that I have vowed upon so infamous a society.

But what consoles me is that there are combatants that remain, because despite all the persecution, the anarchist idea has germinated and the theoretical revolution is ending, being quickly replaced by the practice of action. Oh, then, that day - rotten society, governments, magistrates, exploiters of all kinds, you have lived!

Long live social revolution, long live anarchy!

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Also known as "I am The Enemy of Individual Property." Taken from "Illegalist Trial Statements" available via Little Black Cart. Unsure of original translator.

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