

## SÉBASTIEN FAURE – THE ANARCHISTS AND THE DREYFUS AFFAIR (1898)

### ***Let us explain ourselves***

What has been termed the “anarchists’ meddling” in the Dreyfus Affair has, for some days now, been the subject of so much inaccurate and contradictory and, in some instances, unfair and malicious comment, that it struck me as vital that we set out the circumstances and conditions in which some anarchists have seen fit to engage with the agitation generated by the affair.

Here you will find no transcendent philosophy and no literary enquiry.

In addressing myself to ordinary, upright men, I have but one wish; to see that I am understood; and I have but one purpose in mind; offering a candid and clear explanation of our stand. I shall confine myself to what I said at the meeting in Tivoli Waux-Hall and the rally in the Salle Chayne.

Moreover, the reader might usefully refer to Nos 108, 109, 110, 111, 112 and 113 of the newspaper *Le Libertaire*.

He will see that right from our joining of the campaign, we left the personalities of Dreyfus and Esterhazy out of the matter and espoused a much broader and loftier approach; and that, from first to last, every line that *Le Libertaire* has published regarding this affair and its “implications” has been anarchist, and NOTHING BUT ANARCHIST.

### ***Miscarriage of Justice?***

Insofar as the Dreyfus Affair belonged in the category of “miscarriages of justice”, we took as much interest in it as in anything else of the sort; no more, no less.

A woman proclaims the innocence of her husband who has been sentenced to banishment for life. The man’s family and friends add their protests to those coming from the deportee himself. First Bernard Lazare and then later Scheurer Kestner, Monod, Zola and a number of others who are not in the habit of glibly expressing an opinion when it amounts to diminishing respect for the verdict, assert that we are looking at a ghastly error or frightful iniquity.

### ***Things live up***

The press is in uproar and arguments erupt. The names of persons highly placed in the military and government hierarchy are insistently raised. Parliament echoes to sensational challenges. A huge effort is mounted to quiet the protesters.

An infantry major is denounced. A lieutenant-colonel is recalled from Tunisia. An enquiry is opened.

The agitation grows. Every other event is relegated to the inside pages of the news.

The council of war is assembled, orders a partial *in camera* hearing and, whilst acquitting Major Esterhazy who was denounced by Mathieu Dreyfus, implicitly confirms the sentence passed on the man deported to Devil’s Island.

It was believed that calm was about to be restored, that silence was about to descend. Not a bit of it. The agitation lingered, livelier and stormier than ever.

Political and religious passions come into play. A bare-faced chauvinism, an odious anti-semitism make common cause and rage against all who raise queries and insist upon explanations and enlightenment.

Emotion spreads, with the effervescence reaching undetected into the deepest strata.

Under the heading “*J’accuse*” Emile Zola articulates the assumptions that haunt many minds.

Generals, ministers, expert witnesses, journalists – into the heated indictment are drawn men and institutions which stupidity and the blindness of the mob shroud in craven veneration.

### ***Redoubtable agitation***

The fever peaks and, taking over Paris, the agitation spreads through every significant provincial town. Protests, manifestoes, appeals, insults, threats, exhortations, rallies, street demonstrations, deadly gunfire, windows shattered, shops looted, placards and pamphlets: throughout there is a new development to be added to the already considerable list of incidents deriving from this egg; this denunciation of a miscarriage of justice, this redoubtable unrest.

The newspapers get carried away: with the angry arguments triggered by slights to the honour of the army, love of flag, respect for the verdict of the courts, the preoccupation with national security, the war on the “filthy Jews” and the extraordinary partnering of a sober revolutionary and a militant Catholic.

The restaurants, cafes, meeting-rooms and streets are filled with the din of impassioned conversations; the air is churned by arms raised, menacingly and tragically.

The sides take shape; the leaders of public opinion strive to misdirect it; amid the clash of enthusiasms and the brouhaha of rivalries, an indescribable panic gets a grip on the undecided mind of the popular masses.

Former friends are pitted against one another; former enemies are reconciled.

In short, there is an extraordinary outbreak of abrupt movements and unexpected conclusions.

### ***Revolutionary situation***

And each side, each faction indeed strives to capitalize upon the troubled minds, fretting consciences in order to pose as itself the saviour and denounce its adversaries.

The disclosures, the newspaper articles, the enquiries, the discussions and the indiscretions have called the most highly placed personalities into question and involved the gravest responsibilities.

Today we are a far cry from the Dreyfus Affair proper, meaning the issue of whether that former artillery captain did or did not sell secrets relating to *national defence* to a foreign power! And little attention is being paid even to whether he was sentenced by proper procedure or through trespass against the rights of the accused!

Dreyfus: innocent or guilty? Aside from his family and his friends and the odd rare exception, few really care!

Was Esterhazy guilty or innocent? Who thinks that now.

And that is the point!

### ***Where we are***

At present, the Dreyfus Affair is the Dreyfus Affair no longer.

It has placed the entire social question on the agenda, with all of its complexities. Some see the point as exposing the abuses of militarism, the disorganization of the agencies of the War Ministry, the dereliction of the General Staff and the corruption inside the army; others see it as rallying to the defence of the leadership, rescuing the military organization from mistrust, covering the retreat of those responsible, saving the flag from the mire hanging over it, keeping the cult of the army alive in the hearts of the abused masses as the symbol and instrument of the international struggles required for the safeguarding of social domination.

Some see the point as pressing on with and exacerbating racial and religious hatred and resurrecting, on the pretext of social justice, the despicable practices of the Inquisition and, backed up by the sword, deploying them against a class of outcasts and the damned; whereas others see it as making a stand against this reversion to the Middle Ages, and proclaiming that no longer is there, nor can there be, any accursed race and demonstrating that the only class of individuals deserving of public scorn is that made up of those who wield economic, political or moral authority, whatever their race or religion may be.

Pay close attention to the newspapers, examine the character and leanings of the current demonstrations and, setting aside all bias, and caring for nothing but accuracy, scrutinize the frame of mind and stance of the parties available and we are confident that you will come around to our way of thinking.

That, then, is where we are.

### ***What is to be done?***

Confronted with a situation of such gravity, anarchists had to choose one of three stances, as follows:

1. Ignore the squabble *entirely*.

2. Side with Dreyfus and his friends against Esterhazy and his backers, or with the latter against the former; and, as a result, resolutely join the pro-Dreyfus or pro-Esterhazy alliance.
3. Lastly, not remain wholly detached from the movement, not engage as affiliates of the conspiracy, but rather join in with the agitation and seize upon a particular instance and the battles it generates in order to grapple with the furtherance of the general theses that we hold dear, cautioning the public against damaging frenzy and say what we think, notably with regard to military or civil courts, the army, the leaders, patriotism, religions, anti-semitism, the press and public opinion.

Let me state that we could not espouse either of the first two approaches and that we have made sure not to do so: so we plumped for the third and for what we had to do.

### ***First approach***

Should we, could we have held our tongues? Should the anarchists have stood with folded arms, then? Should they have watched such a spectacle impassively?

Are they not the most conscious, the loftiest thing that humanity has to offer? And should they have stayed on the sidelines, watching with indifference the passage of the flood, the flood that may well wash them away, them first and foremost?

### ***The powerlessness of philosophy***

Clambering up the slopes that lead to the serene heights of pure philosophy, seeking the shelter of the summits, far from the mire of political and religious hypocrisies, now there is one approach, to be sure! And such an approach is to our liking to this extent, that we have occasionally, indeed often, been taxed by certain of our friends with being too easy-going.

But it would be odd if the reproach that these days we are acting and mingling with the movement and throwing ourselves whole-heartedly into the fray and embroiled in the cut-and-thrust, were to come from the very same people who, in normal times, arraign us for wrapping ourselves up in the fog of metaphysics and dressing ourselves up in the clouds of the ideal!

Such floating areas can harbour an elite; but they could never provide an adequate haven for the masses' aspirations and cerebral needs. The latter live life on a day-to-day basis; their minds work on the pertinence of the past; the ideas and sentiments of the crowd are shaped and transformed, not by purely theoretical considerations that link phenomena and knit them together into conclusions, but through the constant analysis of things that follow one upon another, happenings that conflict and ideas that intersect.

### ***The street party***

Philosophers? To be sure, anarchists are that and in the best sense of the term; but they are, besides and above all else, men of action. They are the party of the streets. Whenever the street is convulsed by the electrical disturbances of enthusiasm or revolt, our comrades' place is no longer in their lodgings but outside, with the shuddering, bewildered masses; not for the purpose of directing them, but in order to enlighten them, not to misuse their candour, ignorance or enthusiasms, but in order to change their weaknesses into strengths.

It is deplorable that the crowd, rather than standing up menacingly to the institutions that oppress and keep it famished, is more inclined to be excited by less short-term interests. So much so that it is a source of regret for us and it is in order to guide its unhappiness, its anger, its latent energies in a wholesome direction that we simply must not leave it at the mercy of its hesitancy and loss of heart and not deliver it up to the schemes of the ambitious and the impostors. Furthermore, it is with the aim of undetectably opening it up to the enthusiasms gnawing at us that we must cash in on these ... alas, all too rare moments ... of our dying societies wherein its cerebral existence, multiplied one hundred-fold, opens up to the lessons of reason and its mightily over-excited nerves are overpowered by feverish action.

Anyone misconstruing the often decisive import of such redoubtable moments knows nothing of crowd psychology and is ignoring the lessons of history.

So, confronted with such a formidable agitation, we could not dream of telling our anarchist beads and postponing the task of getting our affairs in order until the *Blessed Social Revolution*.

### ***Second approach***

Were we to join in with the Esterhazy plot or the Dreyfus conspiracy? Could we decidedly commit to the latter versus the former, or to the former versus the latter?

### ***Back Esterhazy?***

There was no way that we could have come out in Esterhazy's favour. Throughout the entire time that he has been called into question, he has enjoyed shameless protection. The War Ministry, the General Staff, the Council of Enquiry, the Council of War, the press and public opinion have all been on his side.

This person is and remains an officer. He still wears his epaulettes and carries his sword. Tomorrow, should war break out, he would pit French proletarians against German workers. Tomorrow, in the event of revolution, he would do his damndest to slaughter us and our insurgent comrades.

He is on the side of the rich, the mighty, the machine-gunners. He is our enemy.

### ***Back Dreyfus?***

We cannot reiterate too much what we have said and written on the subject of Dreyfus.

"Dreyfus the person leaves me cold. As an officer, he was part of that caste of Individuals who would turn their guns on me and my friends tomorrow if, tomorrow, revolt were to rise up haughty and vengeful against Authority's hypocritical rottenness. On that score, I rather dislike him." (*Le Liberaire* No 108, page 1, second column)

But Dreyfus has been stripped of his rank; his epaulettes have been ripped off and his sword broken in two; he has been hit with a life sentence; never again is he to serve as an officer; he must remain an outcast forever:

"We have stated loudly enough and clearly enough and as frequently as the police's intolerance has allowed, just how the fatherland and the army and the flag were, in our eyes, the same bloodstained iniquities whose destruction we seek.

"We have no more interest in any captain than we have in any fatherland and we hold them both in the same stubborn contempt.

"But a man convicted in the most fantastic manner by a justice system upon which we are focused!

"But a race stubbornly scorned, hounded and marked for death by other men who live for the very same vices and who have at least the very same criminal past to their credit!

"That man and that race have indeed been of interest to us since that point. Their fate as victims of persecution, one that we share more and more with them, has very naturally and warmly stirred our passions.

"Authoritarians, be they Christians or Jews and capitalists, be they Christians or Jews, we see as indistinguishably our enemies. But the victim of oppression, no matter his rank, his tribe, his homeland, becomes our comrade in wretchedness, our brother in suffering.

"We do not ask his name nor that of his homeland. We do ask him to join his hand with ours and close ranks against our [enemies].

"Dreyfus is shackled by your laws, Christian world and bourgeois society! You have marked him as the scapegoat for the turpitude of your armies and you would use his blood to wash away the filth from your flags." (*Le Liberaire*, No 113, page 1, columns 4 and 5)

That convict, outcast and victim status (and, as we know, in our eyes all convicts are victims and we strive to rescue them all from servitude, no matter who it is that is suffering it), that situation would be enough to justify largely and maybe even entirely – that view is very viable – the pity that Dreyfus might inspire in us and any succour we might offer him.

When a man is down and suffering and when he is dying, one does not ask his nationality, nor his political opinions, nor what he believes, nor his provenance. One comes to his aid, rescuing from danger and wrestling with death on his behalf.

That is spontaneous, and right and human.

### ***Backing neither the one nor the other***

And were we living in times where it might be possible to feel and act simply as a man (true, in that case, there would be no more Councils of war nor convicts any more) it would be profoundly delightful to live up to his nature, listen to his temperament and instinctively follow the operations of his "ego".

But in our own day, all the strife and danger and being on guard has so atrociously crippled us and left us so systematically distant from our natural, unthinking impulses, that it would very likely be asking too much of the artificial play of our actions to abide by the laws of nature.

Then again, there is more in us than just the man, there is also, shall we say, above all the anarchist who abhors the uniform as symbolic of authority or slavishness, the anarchist who despises the exploitation that is killing him and his comrades.

And the anarchist has gained such an upper hand over the man in each of us that the idea grips us and so consumes us and so profoundly that, in that regard, we could not help but see in Dreyfus and in Esterhazy alike a representative of the army, a defender of the bourgeois order, an adversary.

Which is why we have not pled either the innocence of the one nor the culpability of the other, and why we have not been enthusiasts of either of those two contending personalities, why we have been so indifferent to their quarrel as long as it stayed within the framework of a personal trial, and why we have stood aside from the Esterhazy coalition and the Dreyfusard alliance.

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This consisted, on the one hand, of not entertaining, without engaging with, the agitation; and, on the other, not embracing Dreyfus's cause against Esterhazy, any more than Esterhazy's against Dreyfus, but of taking a hand in the movement in order to foster or implant libertarian trends within it, in order to draw out of the situation triggered by the interference of political cliques and religious and patriotic fanatics, as much advantage as anarchists could extract.

This approach is the one that we had to espouse and the one that we have espoused.

### **Councils of War**

The backdrop to the Dreyfus Affair has shed some light on the scandalous performance of *justice*, whether delivered by military commanders or civilians.

The decision-making by the civilian courts have not escaped the righteous criticism that they should have provoked in men conversant, thanks to scientific procedures, with rigorous analysis and experiment.

But the unlikely prestige enjoyed by the uniform has managed to conjure up around the verdicts handed down by the councils of war such a rampart of respect as great as the numbers of unwitting souls who, even in our own day, still credit that jurisdiction with an infallibility that in the case of the civilian courts they rightly reject.

When it comes to an order handed down by a panel of officers, so powerful is the authority of the matter under consideration that it becomes necessary to affirm and establish that braid-wearing ruffians and ermine-wearers alike are liable to error and prey to the iniquities of command.

We proclaimed this fact at our rallies and in this newspaper:

*"The members of the council of war have brought in a verdict consonant with their beliefs. So be it.*

*"But is not possible – though you may claim it is – that their belief has gone astray, that they have erred? In other words, are they infallible?"*

*"Take those seven judges, one by one. Scrutinize them one after another. Can you see one – a single one of them – likely to be free from error? Can you detect a discernment, a single instance of it, the power and insightful certainty might be such as to close the doors to the sort of intangible and subtle misapprehension that is ever ready to infiltrate human judgment?"*

*"No, no! You cannot see God – because it truly would be such – in this bunch. You are well aware that no one is infallible.*

*"So, can you tell me by what mysterious phenomenon it comes to pass that the whole might contain what cannot be found in the parts? Can you point me towards this prodigy: by what miracle can something not discoverable in any of the component parts have wormed its way into this assemblage?"*

*"Riddle me that, if you can ... you who know nothing of the issue under examination, you imbecile kowtowing to the authority of the verdict rendered!"*

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*"It is an incontrovertible truth that every human being is or can be prey to error. At the very least, admit that – o lunacy! – appointment by some Lord Chancellor and by some military governor can[not] confer infallibility upon the magistrates and officers serving on courts and councils of war; everyone with common sense should be certain that Justice can and does get it wrong."*

*"Nowhere, perhaps, are the facts more numerous and more probative in their support of pure theory. The latter declares that those delivering justice are capable of error. Practice shows that such errors are commonplace and reason dictates that they are beyond number."*

*"The objection will be raised that, such respect being banished from the popular consciousness, the game is up for the judges and for justice; and that it leaves the door open, of necessity, for a review of every trial; that, besides the magistrates, whose role thus far has been to convict, we might have to introduce judges tasked with correcting the mistakes of their predecessors and that the permanent clashes between those two inimical powers, would bring about an unbearable disorder; that such respect is vital for the safety of society, that, ultimately, in the absence of the authority of the matter adjudged, the exercise of justice would be rendered radically impossible."*

*"I readily concede, and all the more readily that such disarray in the judicial apparatus, the proper running of which depends – as is now evident – upon a sheer nonsense, this impossibility of judging, free of the arbitrary and the incoherent, came to our attention years ago and we have been relentless in denouncing it."*

*"With respect for the judgment delivered banished from consciences, and belief in the infallibility of judges banished from our minds, the right of anyone to set themselves up as judge and to prosecute and convict and punish his neighbour is denied; and that put paid to codes and tribunals and prisons and penal servitude and all repressive organization, all social authority: it represents the triumph of Anarchism."*

(Le Liberaire, No 110, columns 1 and 3)

Was there not an urgent need for these things to be said and are these truths not the building blocks of anarchist thought?

### ***Hands off the army***

Dreyfus being part of the army, the emotion roused by the request for a review of his trial inevitably provoked angry outbursts – more ferocious than real – from the patriotic loudmouths with their cant about *France for the French*.

"Hands off the army" has raised a clamour as formidable as the old cry of "Hands off religion!" or indeed "Hands off the family!"

Well now, we, who lay hands on everything and are not cowed by big words, we who have, within ourselves, put all nonsensical veneration on trial, reckoned that the disclosures triggered by the Dreyfus affair and the attacks thereby directed at the military oligarchy, the integrity of the officers, the way the services are organized and the bloodthirsty cult "of the motherland", we reckoned that these circumstances were providing us with an opportunity to give loud expression to the contempt that the sword draggers inspire in us and the hatred we hold for the notions of borders, the army and the disciplines of revanchism and conquest.

### ***Death to the Jews***

Had the traitor been Christian, his treachery might not have unleashed such implacable anger. But he was a Jew and mischievous persons have made it their business to dredge up a past that we might believe laid to rest forever and to drag us back to the accursed days of the religious Inquisition and military dictatorship and have railed with telling fury at Dreyfus and anyone refusing to join in with their odious campaign of mud-slinging and vilification.

It struck the likes of Drumont, Guérin, de Mun, de Pontbriant, d'Hugues and the entire clerical and reactionary crew that there was an extraordinary opportunity here for the propaganda they had been waging for the past ten or fifteen years, and an enhanced likelihood of success and gusto, of meeting no resistance and their managing to rouse and rally, behind the sham pretexts of probity, social justice and national security, all of the oppressive instincts and interests of proprietorial, governmental and religious exploitation.

### ***Confession***

There is a courage in announcing one's cowardice, a strength in acknowledging one's weakness, a token of wisdom in owning up to one's mistakes. Well now, we have no hesitation in confessing: we were gravely wrong in not making an early enough, nor a strenuous enough stand against the anti-semitic trend.

How many times have we heard comrades say: "Anti-semitism leaves us indifferent; it is a quarrel between bourgeois and has nothing to do with us!" Others hinted and even stated openly that the anti-semitic campaign pleased them greatly and struck them as being of the utmost use in the spreading and triumph of libertarian ideas. Finally, some readily echoed the Drumont bunch and chanted: "Down with the Jews! Death to the Yids (*Youpins*)!"

And thanks to the indifference of the first, the unspoken encouragement of the second and the pugnacious complicity of the last of these, the anti-semitic camp, carrying some of the proletarian waters along on its course, has now turned into a reckless torrent, the ravages of which it is not going to be very easy to prevent.

Our excuse – we are always keen to look for one and skilled in coming up with one – is that at the outset anti-semitism disguised its true meaning through its flirtatiousness.

### ***The anti-semitic strategy***

Invoking the term "Jewry", it lashed out with especial viciousness at that cosmopolitan gang of grasping investors and insatiable speculators who harvest a scandalous opulence from the fields of world labour.

In order to make this rabid protest at the adroit joint siphoning off of society's output and public saving appear less exclusive, the movement's promoters, whilst denouncing the Jewish bankers, occasionally indulged themselves in the delights of upbraiding the Christians flirting with the followers of the Talmud in the stock market and in their salons.

Questioned and forced to explain themselves in respect of whether, in their curses, they were targeting only Jewish capital, the anti-semites, whilst accepting some minor chastisement, replied that their criticisms were directed – heedless of racial differences or religious affiliations – at all who live off their investments and erect upon everyone's ruination the unbearable arrogance of their wealth which is as prodigious as it is swiftly come by.

But despite this vague response, the anti-semitic crew carried on feeding to the malicious curiosity of the mob only the names of Jews and carried on directing the resentments of the exploited at them alone. This endeavour has been pursued with such consummate skill and such utter success that if you were to question any ten random individuals as to the names of these footpads who live off thievery in business, industry or finance, those ten will unhesitatingly provide you with the names of Jews and will be hard put to throw in a few Christian names.

### ***The law of History***

Operating along such lines, anti-semitism has been obedient to the law governing every movement in history whose purpose leaves the Authority principle untouched. All such movements draw inspiration from the wrath breathed into the souls of the mob by the suffering and iniquities that grind them down. A body of men emerges which, exploiting this wrath and pillorying injustice, excite the masses against the Masters of the day.

When pay-back time comes, the latter will bear the full burden of the responsibilities they have taken on. They will pay the price. But they are the *bad shepherds* who have made the human instruments rather than the institutions responsible the targets of the irritation. They bide their time until they can portray themselves as saviours. Victory has assuaged the revolts and they are masters of the battle-field, but, being used to obeying, the victors cast around for fresh leaders: they call for them, endure them and fall back under the yoke again.

By the time that, beneath the cries of suffering and the notes of rebellion extracted from them by fresh exactions – the continuations of the old ones – the flock wakes up and rears up, it is too late. The new shepherds have them penned, bound and shackled again.

### ***Away with the masks!***

Such is the impasse into which the anti-semitic onslaught dreams of stampeding us. For a time, they managed to conceal the snare they had set for the ignoramuses among the people.

But the entrepreneurs of the anti-semitic adventure were careless enough to let themselves become intoxicated by their initial successes. The confidence they drew from the outcomes they achieved made them lose all sense of proportion and, convinced that there was no longer any call for trickery, they showed their big guns.

Today, anti-semitism has bared its face, the face of an inquisitor, the tight fist of the capitalist usurer and the bloodthirsty swagger of the ruffian.

Anyone who cannot see that must be blind.

### ***Jewish or Christian Capitalists***

In this swift study it is not my intention to go into a serious, comprehensive examination of the origins, character, tendencies and likely impact of anti-semitism. I can only speak to that very briefly here for the sole purpose of laying out the considerations that prompted us to explore our stance on the Dreyfus affair.

Economically, anti-semitism is a dangerous derivative.

It is not the fight against Capital; nor would it bring about the end of exploitation; it is the expression of the competition between capitalists of differing races.

For centuries, every public office was formally barred to Jews. Under the reign of the old corporations, the hatred with which Christians pursued them kept them away from manual labour. Tracked, banned and persecuted, yet endowed with exceptional powers of resistance, the Jews (Israelites) cast around for a livelihood and found one in business and money-lending. Scattered across the globe, they have managed, ignoring national markets, customs posts and borders, to establish between them a network of business and financial dealings that psychologically predisposed them and materially equipped them in an advantageous way for capitalist rule.

There is no denying their pre-eminence and the disciples of Christ who had for such a long time held, unchallenged, all of the privileges could not take consolation in that.

True, they have clung to ownership of the land and are still the masters of industry. But finance has about it a suppleness, a malleability and an extreme mobility such that, under capitalism, it prevails over every other factor and tends to absorb them.

Which is why Christian capital, outdone by Jewish capital, talks about spoliation and invokes the term 'restitution'.

### ***Spoliation?***

Jews and Christians alike are equally given to spoliation with the same deliberate and implacable ferociousness. Be they bankers, landlords, businessmen, industrialists, Christians and Jews alike practise the same exploitation, live off the same exactions, the same rents, the same profits, the same surplus-values.

### ***Restitution?***

We are the most enthusiastic supporters of this. Teach Jewry's moneybags a lesson? All for it! But as long as we simultaneously empty the strongboxes of the Christian and Protestant moneylenders and provided that no one is overlooked in this restitution! Let them all – employers, landlords, businessmen, rentiers, stockholders, capitalist big and small, Jews or Christians, Protestants or freethinkers, believers or atheists – be fully dispossessed, so that any possibility of oppression may be banished. That is what we want.

But it is not what the semite-eaters want; they are out solely to dispossess the Jews for their own benefit and thereby boost their own powers of exploitation.

Would you be under less pressure, you proletarians, if the pressure was coming in the name of the Gospel rather than the Talmud? Would you feel less preyed upon, less poor, less ground down by weariness and poverty, you workers, if the fruits of your labours were to go exclusively to the Christian and not the capitalist?



Then what?

### ***Monarchy or Republic?***

Anti-semitism is not just a cover for economic conflict; it also acts as an umbrella for political rivalries and what we have just been saying about capitalist rivalries applies equally to competition to govern.

Besides, we know that the State is only the political form of Authority, just as property is only its economic manifestation. We know, moreover, that Government is simply the establishment in Power of the capitalist class per se.

Well now! The war between Christians and Jews impacts simultaneously upon both areas.

Anarchists make no particular distinction between different types of governments. In their eyes, Monarchy, Empire, Republic are political forms in the idiom of different times and settings, but fostering the same misery and the same slavery. History and experience have demonstrated time and again that the exploitation and degradation of the masses proceed as inevitably and as intensely under the Republic as under the Monarchy and that when it comes to Masters, be they elected or imposed, there is no reason to prefer one over the other. But if, *economically*, it matters not to a proletarian whether a Jewish or a Christian capitalist gets rich, so, *politically*, the same goes for whether a person is subject to a monarchist government or a republican one; but the same cannot be said of the Masters who are forever bickering over the privilege of enslaving and grinding underfoot.

Defeated political parties never give up completely and when their strength has diminished and their supporters shrunk and their organizations fallen into shambles, they no longer feel up to openly laying siege to the fortress of Power, they resort to trickery and use the element of surprise.

### ***The mudslide of reaction***

At present, anti-semitism is the movement upon which all of the cast-off debris have staked their over-riding hope of restoration.

Royalist flotsam and jetsam, plebiscite- and Napoleon-supporting filth, left-over Boulangists and clerical scum, all these filthy reactionaries have collected in that main sewer.

Aided and abetted in their efforts, their schemes favoured by widespread corruption and cowardice, this bunch of Caesarists, ranging from militant Catholics to certain down-at-heel revolutionaries, is secretly being egged on by that bunch of pseudo-republicans led by the ex-Communard Meline.

This squalid coalition of all the scoundrels who call for a strong government as a way of resisting the ever-growing power of the revolutionary cadres and stem the incontrovertible spread of the spirit of revolt, looks to the triumph of barrack-dweller and churchman.

### ***Sabre and Aspergillum [holy water sprinkler]***

In conservative circles the reckoning is that it is high time that, more than ever, they close ranks and strengthen the ties that have always linked priest and soldier; the priest whose social mission is to cultivate the spirit of obedience and resignation that ensures that the laws are respected and privileges safeguarded; the soldier, whose only function is to put down disturbances and stifle uprisings.

Theirs is a dogged partnership, stubborn enough to have weathered upwards of a hundred years of democracy, which goes to show the blindness and naivety of those who cannot grasp the strict marriage of these three ideas – Government, Religion, Army, the unbreakable bond between those three tyrants, Government, Priest and Warrior: the government that lays down the law, the priest who inserts respect for and love of the law into men's minds, and the warrior who, into the battle waged by Revolt against the law, throws the might of his cannons.

### ***We had to step in***

It is when thought, unfolding its wings, seeks to escape from the shadowy areas that the priestly caste has held in thrall for centuries past; and when a formidable roar emerges from the breasts of the mob as they express disgust with the General Staff and revulsion at the military oligarchy; and what if, criminally letting slip such a magnificent opportunity to condemn and combat the coalition of uniform and soutane, anarchists were to turn their thoughts from the activity that is characteristic of them and dwell instead on philosophical dissertations, speculative abstractions and contemplative

posturing? And all on the incorrect pretext – because we must hark back to our starting-point – that the Dreyfus affair and the agitation it has triggered are none of our concern?

So let us get to it!

### ***All movement matters***

Yes, indeed! This unprecedented and prolonged effervescence interests us.

In sociology as in chemistry, nothing is created, nothing lost. In the interrupted onward march of humanity, everything is logically and inevitably connected; and just as the slightest spill of a liquid molecule triggers incalculable and successive impacts upon the vastness of the Ocean, just as the slightest vibration in the immeasurable panes of space ripples through the layers of the atmosphere, covering the widest distances, so, in the connections between events through the ages, every phenomenon mathematically lead on to the next, without the slightest loss.

Had we had to limit our efforts, and if our aim could or should be defined in terms of restricted aspirations, unassuming demands and limited outcomes, if our proposition was merely to shed a little truth and light into the world of darkness and falsehood in which we operate, if we were to banish the skyline of happiness and beauty our eyes can detect from the borders that cordon it off, then, perhaps, we might overlook any movement that might not fit in with the framework we have set for ourselves. But our skyline recognizes no borders, and our heart tells us to carry the torch of truth into every nook and cranny of the social labyrinth; our demands know no limits and our aspirations are infinite, our dream knows no boundary and our endeavours are universal.

Which is why anything that stirs catches our interest, no where it may come from or be headed.

Who would be so bold as to measure its depth and its breadth?

### ***A few objections answered***

It only remains for us to answer a few objections.

We will be told: “You have your work cut out to hold back from taking Dreyfus’s side: your campaign nonetheless works in his favour.”

Well then, so be it! What should we care! Should it be a cause of regret to us that a man benefits in the short term from the theories that are ours and the application of which will some day be of benefit to all? Are we to suppose that we have helped rescue the man deported to Devil’s Island from penal servitude? Would such an outcome run counter to our wishes and the goal we pursue? Sending some away to penal servitude or keeping him there – now that runs counter to our principles; but freeing a prisoner or convict is perfectly consonant with our desires. Of course, those desires go further than that and we dream of restoring the freedom and *joie de vivre* not just to one convict, but to all without distinction. Albeit that our only regret would be that what we sought for every victim of legal travesty was achieved for just one of them.

Whenever the Panama scandal erupted, did it bother us that it was found that opposition politicians were out to profit by it? And were we supposed to forego the delights of stigmatizing parliamentary corruption just because the downfall of the parties hurt by that public disgrace might have fed the ambitious aims of their rivals?

### ***The Truth and its consequences***

Besides, does truth care about whatever consequences it entails?

And when the light hits our eyes are we supposed to fear its brightness or to hold back from showing it to one and all, just because someone who is indifferent or some adversary might benefit from it, especially when we benefit from it ourselves?

One of the most formidable skills of the powerful is banishing from the popular consciousness of truths of which it is just starting to become aware, by rattling the ghost of the consequences which might follow from the proclaiming of them. Our masters do not combat our propaganda by dismantling our arguments and proving the nonsensicality of our ideal. They scare the credulous and the ignorant by painting a false portrait of the consequences that they contend would result if our teachings were to triumph.

Truth hovers above such wretched quibbling: it cares not a jot for whatever outcomes follow.

Something is correct or wrong, depending upon whether it spawns things that are useful or things that are harmful. IT IS. And it is an honour as well as a source of strength for us that in our observations we pay heed only to correctness in and of itself.

### ***Against all iniquity***

It is an honour and a source of strength for us also to voice objections to injustice from whatever source and regardless of the victim.

We are too committed to truth and have too broad an understanding of Justice for it to be otherwise.

We have rightly taken the bourgeois to task for keeping quiet when our people were falling beneath the blows of the most odious capriciousness. Our indignation when, turning a deaf ear to our appeals, they refused to add their protests to ours, was huge and it was justified. How are we now to go about shaming our enemies for failing to speak out on behalf of our friends, the victims of injustice, when, if need be, we were to act the same way towards them?

Let us savour the delights of giving vent to our indignation and flaying iniquity, no matter who the victim may be. Maybe that will serve the mob as a lesson and an example.

### ***In camera [behind closed doors] proceedings***

Still, we will be told: "Why bother about *in camera* proceedings? Are you making a distinction between those sorts of proceedings and other sorts? Quibbling over *in camera* proceedings is tantamount to recognizing the law and recognizing the law is anti-anarchist."

Our answer is simple. Here goes:

If we take exception to *in camera* proceedings it is not that we were acknowledging the right – conditionally – to convict. We know and we proclaim that law is merely the consecration of the prerogatives that the powerful have usurped over the weak; we know that it sanctions all manner of spoliation and riding roughshod: as a result, we wash our hands of its implementation, regardless of what form it may take.

We know and proclaim that nothing can weigh up actions, gauge intent, identify motives or determine the precise implication behind a spoken word, an impulse, or work out the responsibilities involved. Consequently, we deny that anyone is capable of sitting in judgment of another.

On that score, our belief is unshakable.

But if application of the law remains an iniquity, by our reckoning there are degrees of iniquity and *in camera* proceedings aggravates matters.

Because *in camera* represents a stifling of the voice, making it impossible for the poor creature in the clutches of the judiciary to mount his defence freely; it represents the quiet resuscitation of the *lettre de cachet* – treacherous and ignoble! – with this terrifically aggravated feature; the *lettre de cachet* was unmistakable arbitrary whereas *in camera* proceedings come dressed up in the finery of legality.

The anarchist outcry has always protested against that mode of judgment; and our reproach targeting *in camera* proceedings, whether used against an enemy or an officer, is undiminished.

Some of our friends have been hit by that questionable weapon; we ourselves came within an ace of succumbing to it three years back. We spewed out our indignation when we and our own were involved; and we throw it in the faces of the judges today, even though it involves the freedom and the life of a man who means nothing to us.

*In camera* proceedings, have been used, are being used and will be used in order to convict anarchists; the blackguarding or deportation of a Jew is allowed; tomorrow the target may be the socialists, the radicals, the freethinkers, the high-minded – more numerous than one might think – or the quick, the knowledgeable and the willing. Here they will invoke reason of State; there, the interests of the Homeland; elsewhere, wholesome morality; everywhere, public or national safety. Which is how, tomorrow, a cornered government may invoke this assistance against all of whom it would be rid.

*In camera* proceedings therefore signify outlawry, prison and the death penalty hanging over all our heads.

They are abominable and revolting!

### **In camera proceedings and the strike**

Allow us an analogy and let the comrades kindly ponder it. Whenever an employer, driven to it by the imperious pressure of the need to be competitive, seeks to foist a wage cut upon his workers, who are already staggering under the burden of abnormal labour and inadequate pay, do we not fully endorse those workers should they fall back upon that form of resistance of which the law recognizes the legitimacy: the strike?

However, we are well aware and will readily reiterate that wage slavery is not susceptible to improvement and the only remedy for the ills suffered by the proletariat lies in the utter eradication of wage slavery.

But common sense and observation have also taught us that the refusal to endure worsening poverty and falling a rung lower on the ladder of exploitation represents an act of revolt that has the capacity to stand up to the encroachments of an insatiable Capital.

Which is the reason why, in such an eventuality, we stand with the strikers and against the employer.

For the very same reason, and whilst proclaiming that the Law is always iniquitous and that the sole remedy to the problems burdening us lies in the complete abolition of the Law, we speak out against anything that might be tantamount to aggravation of slavery or arbitrariness.

### ***Danger of summary justice***

Finally, we cannot emphasize too strongly the dangers implicit in allowing the authorities to acquire a taste, through practice, impunity, or public indifference, for summary justice, executions or suppression.

Deep down, the drama of society revolves entirely around this action: the age-old struggle between the privileged who enjoy Power and wealth, and the oppressed and poor. It may well be that sometimes political rivalries, religious hatreds, dynastic competitions, financial, industrial or business competition pit the leaders against one another, igniting a war between our Masters. But history shows that, when all is said and done, it is always the poor who bear the costs of such conflicts and discord.

Sooner or later, the bandits of high finance and the mischief-makers who lead the mob and unleash the masses wind up coming to some arrangement and reconciliation is achieved at the expense of the eternally despoiled and appeasement purchased with the blood of the butchered, sacrificed mobs.

Be on your guard!

We know that, by its very nature, Authority survives and grows only by dint of the numbers of victims that it gobbles up; let us not lose sight of the fact that, when it comes to immolating victims, it acquires a taste for and accustomed to such holocausts and that only our energy is equipped to thwart and curtail its savage instincts and ferocious appetites.

### ***Back in the Middle Ages***

Despite the centuries separating us, we are still smack dab in the middle of the Middle Ages. True, faith has been banished from many a heart; a host of enlightened and judicious minds have loosened the yoke of laughable superstitions, that much is true; but our times remain awash with mysticism-riddled religiosity.

A couple of steps from here on the far side of the Pyrenees, the Inquisition parades its torture instruments just as it did back in the despicable days of the Dominicans and Torquemada. A little farther away, in Austria and in Algeria, hatreds engendered and sustained by religious sectarianism have led to massacres of Jews.

Even further afield, in Crete, in Armenia, in Turkey, hundreds of thousands of human beings are being murdered in the name of Koran and Gospel.

All around us, under the colours of social justice or patriotism, men of mischief, reviving the theory of accursed races, clamour for death and strive to pit the misused masses against some category of pariah.

### ***The real pariahs***

Let us bear it in mind that, within this society of blood and mud in which we are living, the real pariahs are those – Christians or Jews – who have directed against this world of iniquity and wretchedness a hatred that its countless crimes have earned it.

Let us not let them revive the blood-stained theory of damned races: of which we would inescapably be the first victims.

### **Libertarian apostolate**

Let us mingle with the masses. Let us commend to them the convictions we cherish; let us set them ablaze with the flames that burn inside us; let us pass over to them the hatreds that gnaw at us, the wrath we feel, the dreams that haunt us, the hopes that sustain us, the energies that drive us on.

Let us draw them away from the derivative squabbling that blind them to their true interests and postpone the hour of deliverance.

Parliamentarism, army, judiciary, clergy, civil service, all of the institutions are collapsing into the mud.

Property, homeland, government, religion, family, and all the beliefs that make our masters strong are crumbling into putrefaction.

The authoritarian world understands that and, through the words of its rulers and the pens of its hack journalists, it orders a cease-fire.

That wish, that order dictated by the bourgeoisie to Power, dictates how we behave: keep the fires burning, keep the agitation going. If such ferment is not to the liking of the Masters, it should delight us; if it does disservice to the interests of the executioners, that thought alone is enough to reassure the victims that it raises the prospects of their cause succeeding and of their ideal spreading.

### ***One final objection***

One final word.

Those people devoid of convictions of any sort who are unaware of their strength and the joy they bring, will not fail to suggest that we could well be part of this famous syndicate which appears to be open-handed when it comes to throwing gold around. Others, driven by beliefs as fervent as our own, will express misgivings as to our being, supposedly, on the pay-roll of that syndicate.

To the former we say: Nitwits! Do you think any such syndicate actually exists? If it did, and if it had the enormous resources credited to it by your prodigious powers of imagination, do you think, can you think for a single moment that it would not have long since bought all of the newspaper owners who shape parliament and mould public opinion and who are all for sale? ...

To the others our answer is: Can we neutralize partisanship and bad faith? Must we defer to opinion and abide by its injunctions? Might it not be good, indeed better, to gird our loins and stick to our course without paying any heed to the calumnies of deceivers and the treacheries of the 'mischievous'?

And if we were to keep silent, might the claim not be made that our silence has been bought? And if we were to mingle with the people, urging it to "keep out of this"; what would there be then to ward off the argument that we have been paid huge sums from the clericals and anti-semites to leave the streets clear for them so that they might proceed without impediment, without resistance?

Hasn't it been asserted time and again that the anarchists are on the government's pay-roll?

Haven't the parliamentary socialists not repeated time and again that we are playing out the game of the reactionaries who are paying us? And have these infamous allegations – silly, yet believed in many circles – not chilled or discouraged us?

What would the steadfastness and ardour of our feelings amount to if such a fear were to succeed in freezing the message of truth upon our lips?

### ***Two Syndicates***

The Syndicate? Yes, we are part of it. But the point is to find out which one. There are two syndicates that engage people and which acknowledge neither homeland, nor religion, nor race: the syndicate of wealth and that of poverty, the Masters' Federation and the Rebels'.

The time has come to choose and make up one's mind. We have made our choice. We belong to the syndicate of the revolt against civilian and military oppression, against war and army, against religion and priests, against capital and exploitation, against the State and the propertied, against all the institutions and beliefs that mutilate the individual, render effort sterile and life painful.

Sébastien Faure

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<https://archivesautonomies.org/IMG/pdf/anarchismes/avant-1914/lelibertaire/faure-les-anarchistes-et-laffaire-dreyfus.pdf> (from <https://anarchiv.wordpress.com/2018/03/26/les-anarchistes-et-laffaire-dreyfus-par-sebastien-faure-1898/> which has a link to an article by Luc Nemeth on 'Un accélérateur d'énergies dans l'espace dreyfusard : Sébastien Faure, du début de l'Affaire au procès Zola' from 2005.)

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