

THE BOMB THROWERS



a study of Terrorism

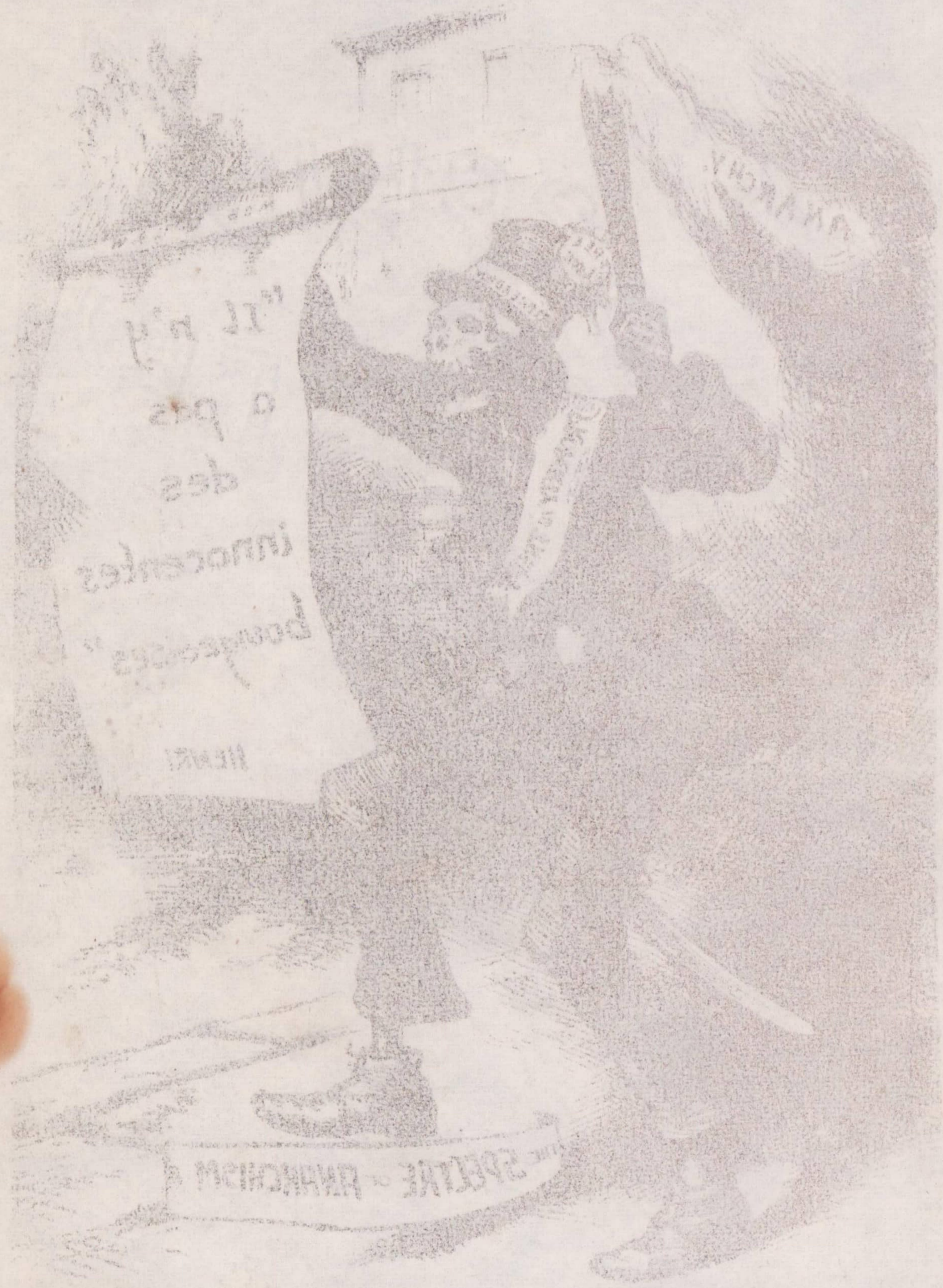
by R.A.T.

No. 3

10 p.



THE BOMB THROWERS



A Study of Terrorism by R.A.T.



No. 3
10p.

Why this pamphlet ?

I have always been interested in the 'Anarchist bomb-thrower' image of anarchists, and with the advent of what appears to be a resurgence of that phenomena in England at the moment, I decided to find out some more about its origins. What I found prompted me to write this pamphlet.

Although I came to believe that terrorism cannot play a part in making the revolution - for the reasons I discuss in the last section of the pamphlet - I felt that the life stories of the French bomb-throwers could not be dismissed, for reasons which will be apparent as you read their histories in the following section. The words of Ravachol, Vaillant, Henri and Caserio explain their actions more vividly and with more conviction than this author could, with hindsight to show the futility, and soft-living to take the sting from their declarations.

However, I also felt that it was not enough just to admire the courage of these men. The effects of their actions in France at the time, and on the image that anarchism would have from their day onwards, are both of significance. Significant both in the development of socialist thought in France, with recent repercussions in the French May '68 events, and in the development of anarchism as a strand of socialist thought throughout the world.

The mystique which surrounds these men must be looked at rather coldly; while it must be admitted that they believed totally in the revolution which would right the injustices and cruel suffering all around them, the fact must also be faced that their actions were probably less effective in bringing about change than the uncelebrated anarchists who worked to achieve the syndicalist movement in the early 1890's.

I present this pamphlet to inform people about the real 'bomb-throwers', as well as to try to examine the phenomena and its effectiveness.

* * * * *

I apologise before-hand to any readers who are more knowledgeable on the subjects treated than I. I do not profess to be a historian. I have tried to read as many source books as possible, but unfortunately, I do not read french very fluently, and so most of the wealth of information on France, and the French anarchists, was not available to me. I hope that my readers may be stimulated, or infuriated, by my descriptions and conclusions to find out more for themselves.

As a start, for anyone who wants to read more fully, these are the books I used :-

- Cole : 'Socialist Thought -Marxism and Anarchism -1850 to 1890.(Macmillan)
- Longoni: 'Four Patients of Dr. Deibler' (Lawrence and Wishart.)
- Woodcock: 'Anarchism' (Penguin).
- 'Ravachol et les Anarchistes' (Gallimard) - in French.
- Dave Dellinger : 'There's no business like Bomb- Business', OZ No. 33.
(Reprinted from Liberation Magazine).

FRANCOIS CLAUDIUS RAVACHOL, was born on the fifteenth of October, 1859, at St. Chamond, in the St. Etienne district. His father deserted the family of four, and his mother was reduced to begging to feed the children. At eighteen years old, two years after his mother's death, Ravachol was in charge of the cupboard of corrosives in the factory in which he worked. One day, unsuspectingly, he gave a woman some vitriol with which to kill rats. She used it to throw into the face of her lover, and Ravachol was sacked. The dismissal was recorded on his work card in red ink, and with unemployment as high as it was then, Ravachol knew that he could not expect any future work.

By February 1892, when he went to Paris, he had become a propagandist by deed. He joined the local anarchist group on his arrival, amongst whom he was insistent that the imprisoned anarchists, Decamp and Dardare, be avenged. These two had been arrested for their involvement in the violent May Day demonstrations at Clinchy Levallois, in 1891, where a massive strike against the terrible work conditions at the mines had been going on. The owners had called in the 'Forces of Law and Order' in response to pickets, and men, women and children had been shot. Decamp and Dardare were given three and five years in prison by the presiding judge, M. Benoit. On the 11th. of March 1892 Ravachol, and two other members of the group, placed a bomb in the house of M. Benoit. The bomb caused considerable damage but no loss of life.

The police carried out raids on the houses of known socialists and anarchists. On the 21st. of March, Chaumentin, whose house was used for meetings of the group, and in whom Ravachol confided, was arrested, when explosives were found at his house. No charge was made, but he was detained for 'helping the wife and children of Decamp' ! Chaumentin later turned out to be a police informer.

On the 27th. of March, Ravachol, this time alone, went to No. 36, rue de Clichy and left a dynamite bomb on the second floor; the apartment of M. Bulot, the Public Prosecutor. On this occasion five people were injured and great damage caused. The police continued their search. Another young anarchist, Simon, who had helped with the first bomb, was arrested, and later Madame Chaumentin. The police then raided Ravachol's flat, and issued a description of him. He was arrested on the first of April.

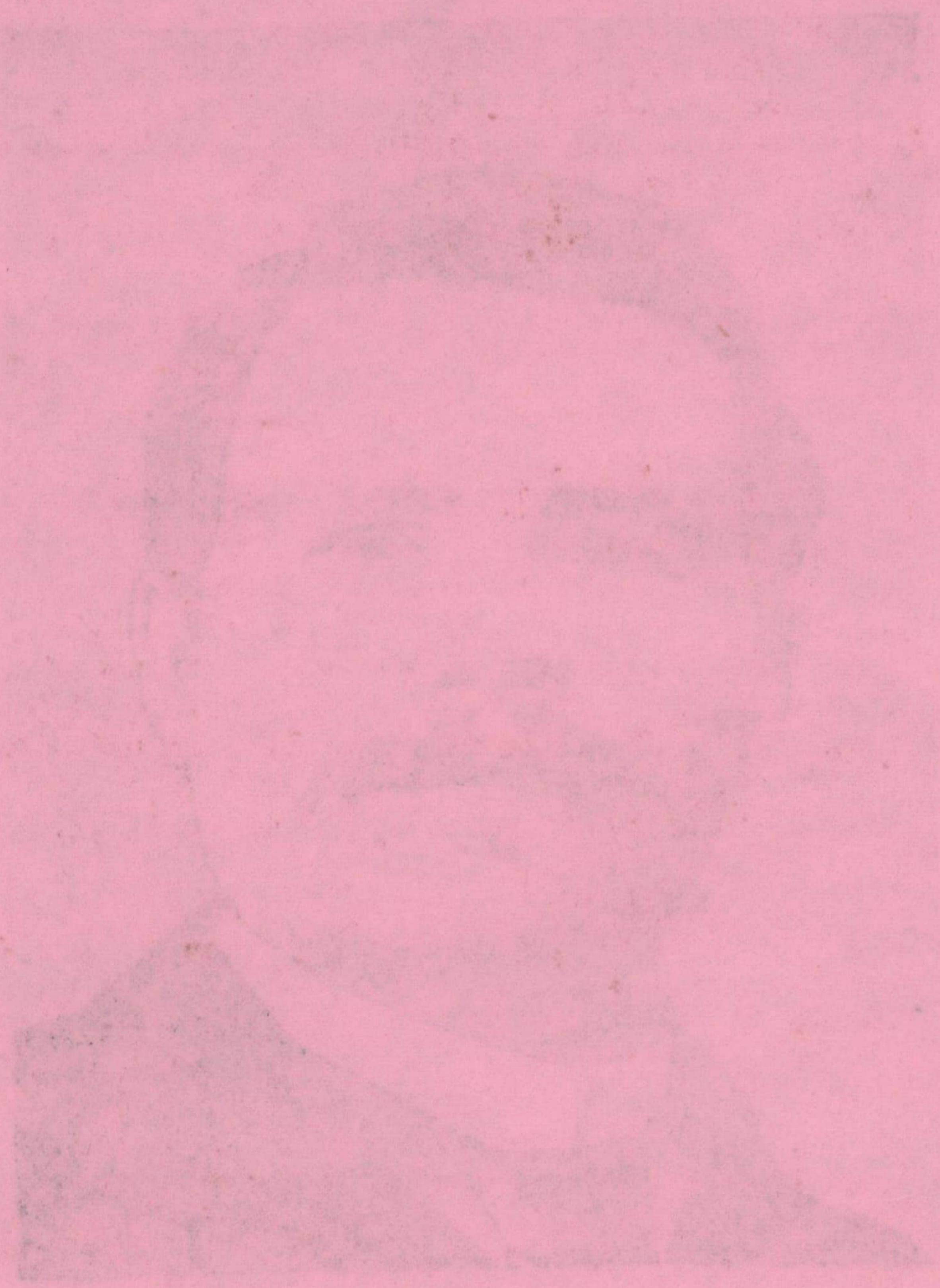
His stay in No. I cell was spent in conversation with his warders about anarchism and the reasons for his exploits; in reading and in recovering from the beating he had received from the police. The law extending the death sentence to dynamiting had not then been voted on by the senate, so that after three other comrades arrested on the same charge had been acquitted, Simon and Ravachol were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Ravachol was then transferred to Montbrison prison to appear before the Court of Assize of Loire on the 21st. of June, to answer five murder charges. He was acquitted of four of the charges, apparently brought up because they had lain unsolved for over a year, and the evidence was sufficiently vague to fit anyone of Ravachol's age and size. He was also charged with, and admitted to, attempting to rob the buried corpse of the Marquise de Rochetaille of its jewels. He had broken into the tomb and blown the coffin open. On feeling the foetid body he had realised that he had wasted all his efforts, there were no jewels. The crowd in the courtroom were scandalised and revolted, but Ravachol explained that he thought it wrong for jewels of great value to be buried with a corpse, when the children of workers hadn't enough to eat.

The fifth murder that he was charged with had taken place in June 1891, a month after the grave robbing attempt. Ravachol had actually been arrested for this murder the day after, but had managed to escape, and had made his way to Paris. Ravachol admitted murdering the 'Hermit' Jacques Brunel, nicknamed so by the local peasants because he had lived for over fifty years in a cell in an old ruined



FRANÇOIS RAVACHOL
1859 - 1892



FRANÇOIS RAVACHOL

1859 - 1895

monastery near St. Chamond. He roamed the villages in the locality begging alms, and received quite considerable sums from tourists and superstitious peasants, in return for saying masses. When Ravachol had attempted to rob the 'Hermit', there was money all over his cell; in cupboards, under the bed, and in the loft. Ravachol had knocked Brunel over the bed and stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth, and in the struggle the 'Hermit' had been strangled. Ravachol had taken all the gold and silver he could carry, the suspicious parcels had led to his arrest.

Ravachol was sentenced to death for the murder on the 23rd of June, 1892.

The following are extracts from Ravachol's declaration during the trial, from Père Peinard, an anarchist newspaper.

" I am not speaking for the purpose of defending myself against the accusations that have been made against me, because the society which by its organisation sets men in continual struggle with one another is responsible. And in fact do we not see today in all classes and in all functions, people who desire - I won't say death, for that would sound too bad - but the misfortune of their fellow men.....

Does not an employer desire the disappearance of all his competitors? Do not all business men desire to benefit alone from the gains which their particular business offers? Does not the unemployed worker in his desire to obtain work, wish that some other worker in a job will be dismissed no matter what the reason, to make way for him?.....

Do employers worry when they sack workers as to whether they will starve to death? Do those who wallow in luxury worry whether some people lack the basic things for living?.....

There are a few people who go to their aid, but they are powerless to relieve the wants of all those in need, who die prematurely because of privations of every sort, or by their own hand in order to put an end to them. This is what the Hayem family did, and the woman Souhain, who killed her children so as not to see them suffer any longer.....

And all these things happen amid an abundance of every kind of product! One could understand if they happened in a country where products were scarce, and where there is famine. But in France, where abundance reigns, where the butchers shops are full of meat, the bakeries of bread.....

What can a man do if he lacks the necessities of life even when he is working? If he becomes unemployed there is nothing left for him but to die of starvation; then a few words of pity will be pronounced over his remains. That is what I have preferred to leave to others. I became a contrabandist, a counterfeiter, a burglar and a murderer. I could have begged - it is degrading and cowardly! And it is even punished by your laws which make poverty a crime.....

If all the needy instead of waiting were to take what they need in the places where it is, and no matter in what manner, then the satisfied would understand more quickly the danger of wanting to consecrate the existing social order where anxiety is permanent and life threatened every moment.....

" They would understand that in the end the anarchists are right when they say that to enjoy mental and physical tranquility one must destroy the causes which engender crimes and criminals.

For it will not be by suppressing the man who, rather than die a slow death in consequence of the privations he has endured and will have to go on enduring without hope of seeing an end to them, prefers, if he has a little energy - taking by violence that which could ensure his well-being, even at the risk of his life, the loss of which would only be an end to his sufferings, that crime will be abolished.

That is why I have committed the acts I have been reproached with; they are but the logical consequence of the barbarous state of a society which does nothing but augment the number of its victims by the rigour of its laws which punish the effects but never touch the causes.....

It is said that it is cruel to take the life of one's fellow man. But those who talk like this do not see that one resorts to it to avoid having to take one's own.....

Yes, you too gentlemen of the jury, are doubtless going to sentence me to death, because you will believe it to be necessary and disappearance will be a satisfaction to you who have a horror of seeing the shedding of blood.....

But when you become convinced that its shedding will be of use in assuring the security of your existence you will not hesitate a moment more in doing it than I did; but there is a difference; that you will do it with no risk whatever while I, on the contrary placed both my freedom and my life in jeopardy.....

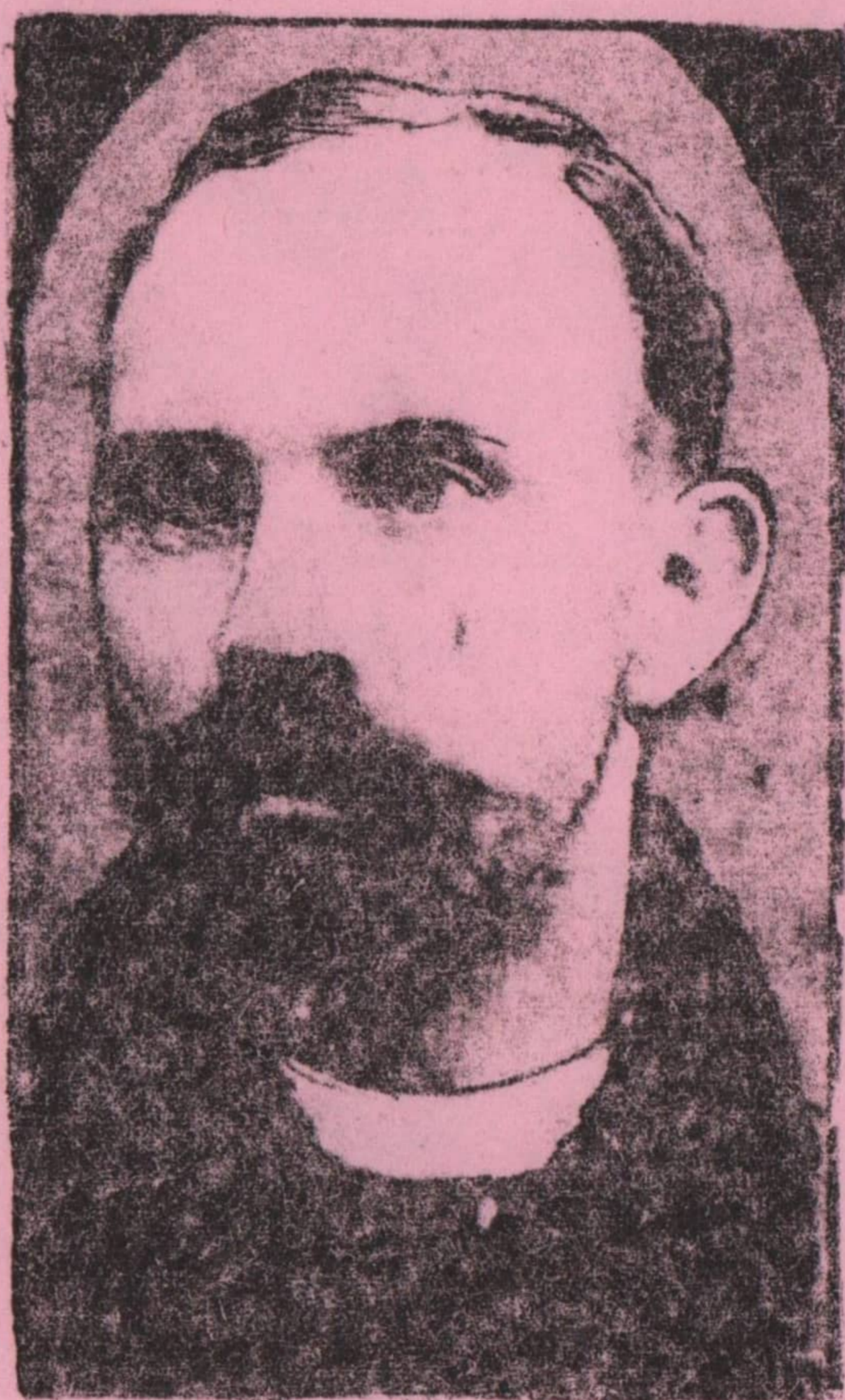
What must we do then? Destroy poverty, that seed of crime, by assuring all the satisfaction on their needs. And how easily this can be realised: it suffices to build society on a new foundations so that everything will be held in common and everyone who produces will be able to consume according to his needs.....

Then we will no longer have people like the Hermit of Notre Dame de Grace and others begging for the money of which they will later become the slaves and the victims. We will no more see women their attractions like vulgar merchandise in exchange for that metal which very often prevents us from knowing whether love is truly sincere.....

I am but an uneducated worker but because I have lived the life of the poor I feel the iniquity of your repressive laws with greater keenness than a rich bourgeois.....

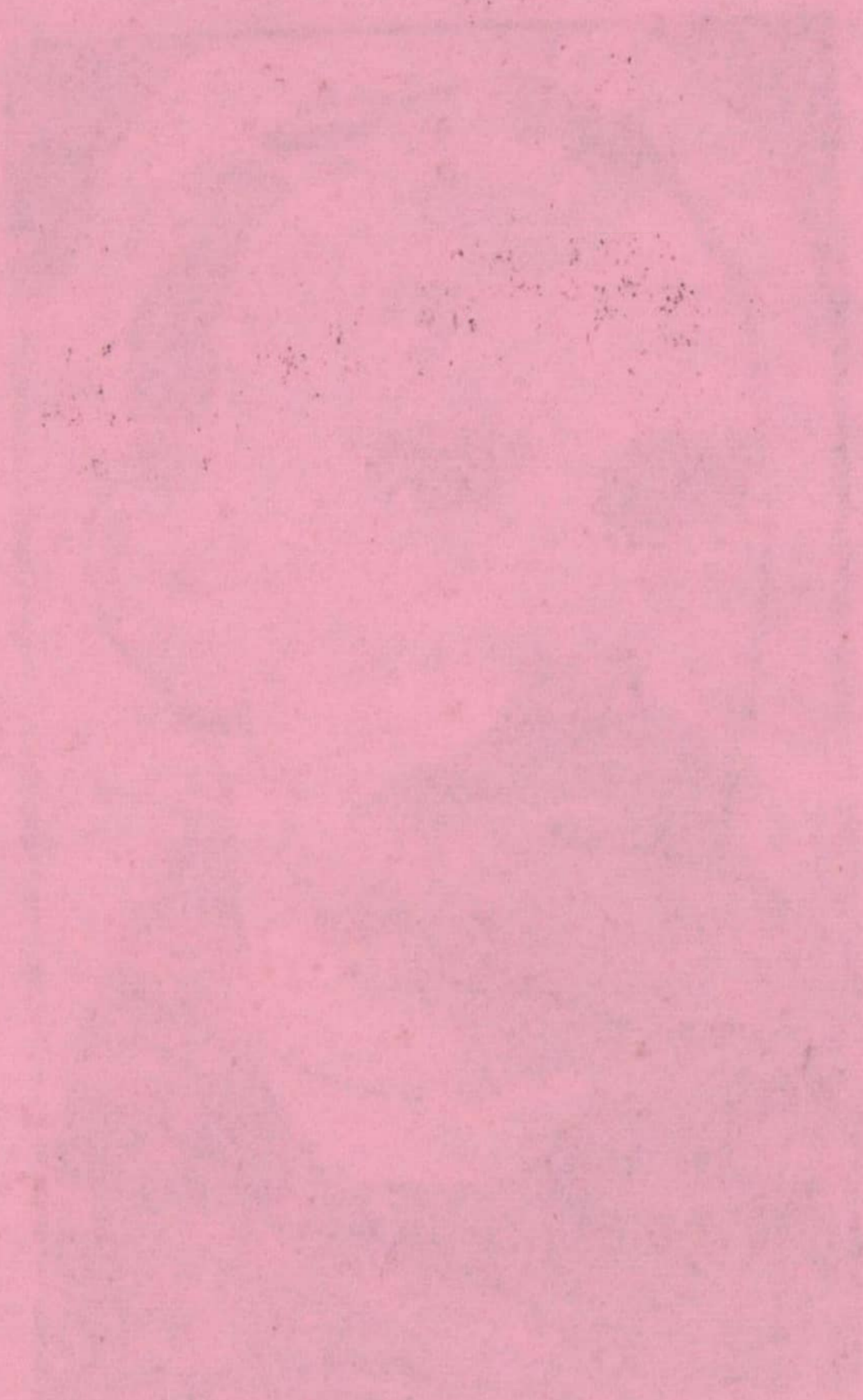
I have worked to live and to allow my dependants to live.- So long as neither I nor my dependants did not suffer too much I remained what you would call 'honest'

Then I was thrown out of work - and with unemployment came hunger. It was then that the great law of nature, that imperious voice which brooks no reply, the instinct of self-preservation, drove me to commit certain of the crimes of which you accuse me and of which I do not consider myself the perpetrator"



AUGUSTE VAILLANT

1861 - 1893



AUGUSTE WILLEBRANDT

1831 - 1893

AUGUSTE VAILLIANT, was the illegitimate son of a gendarme and a domestic servant. His father refused to recognise him and he was left on the streets to fend for himself, begging or stealing in the struggle to keep alive. He was caught and sentenced to short imprisonments several times. He managed to teach himself to read, while still a homeless street urchin, and fed his appetite for learning on natural history, astronomy, and philosophy.

At the age of twenty-five he left France for Argentina, full of plans and enthusiasm for the new life ahead; having believed all the lies of the emigration agents.

He and his companions were dispatched to a town of about fifty thousand, where, instead of becoming colonisers themselves, they were left with nothing until they hired themselves out to the big landowners for starvation wages. They were taken by a Count, but when he sold his estates, the immigrants were thrown into the bargain. The English company that bought them began by selling food to the 'peons' at exorbitant prices. Not wishing to die of hunger, Vaillant and a companion named Gerard called together the peons, and they marched on the offices of the administrators to call on the managing director to fulfill the promises made to them, including that of distributing food to them. On receiving no satisfaction from this individual, the peons marched to the bakery, where Vaillant started to hand out bread. The two instigators, Vaillant and Gerard, were arrested, but the managers were too worried about the possibility of an uprising to deal with them as they would have wished. They were released but Gerard was re-arrested and sentenced to a month imprisonment.

Vaillant tried to get the others to march on the judge, but only a few followed him, for the others had been softened by the conciliators sent by the company. No concessions were secured. All Vaillant's efforts to achieve better working conditions had come to nothing, and in the end he decided to attempt an escape with some of his friends. They went downriver on rafts, and successfully evaded the posse of military on the look-out for escaping peons. Vaillant managed to get to Buenos Aires, but life was just as difficult there, and discouraged, having lost all his illusions, he returned to France.

In France he was still unable to find work other than at a starvation-level wage, and he decided to act; to throw a bomb in the Chamber of Deputies, the fountain-head, from which he felt all social injustice flowed.

On the 9th of December 1893 he flung his bomb. It exploded in the air and enveloped the Chamber in a thick cloud of green smoke; a shower of nails rained onto the benches of the deputies. When the confusion had abated, it was found that about eighty people had been injured, sixty of whom were spectators in the gallery. None of the injuries were serious, most were superficial cuts from the nails with which the bomb had been filled. Vaillant was caught and arrested on the spot.

The fear and anger created amongst the bourgeoisie was reflected in the words of the Deputy M. Challemeil-Lacour:

"I cannot find words to convey the intensity of the indignation which we all of us feel at this moment: we count upon the energy, the courage of the government and the promptitude of its resolutions. It is not only a question of rendering impossible, or at least more difficult, a series of crimes which has already struck fear into people's hearts and of assuring its repression; it is a question of extirpating an abominable sect at open war against society, against all moral laws, and which proclaims its aim as the destruction of everything and its means as crime and terror.

It is time, it is high time, to arrest this contagion: the Government is

proud to have the approbation of public opinion, that of all parties; it can count upon the collaboration of all public authorities and notably of the Senate."

In order to 'arrest the contagion', all anarchist newspapers were seized; the tobacco shops and newsagents were forbidden to sell *Père Peinard*, *La Révolte* (edited by Kropotkin), *Revue Libertaire*, and even the *Parti Socialiste*. On the 1st of Jan. 1894 raids were carried out on the homes of anarchists and suspected anarchists; 2,000 warrants were issued by the Seine Public Prosecutors office; 64 arrests were made.

Meanwhile Vaillant was in jail, somewhat downhearted that his attempt had achieved so little, but still sure of his stand, as he explained in a letter to his companion:

"...you know that my temperament and my straightforward character, full of frankness, could only lead me, at the sight of so much suffering which afflicts the disinherited of this world, to break with society; you will remember how much I suffered when I saw that it was impossible for me to provide you with the necessities of life; Oh! I don't regret for a moment what I have done; I would suffer all my life if they don't guillotine me, for separation from you would be my greatest suffering. But I have done my duty, I have done all that I could to hasten the end of the society which kills us, and its substitution by a better one, in which everyone will be able to live decently by his work.

If only you knew how they vilify me in the indictment which has just been handed to me! I am a thief, a vagabond, a murderer etc. etc., I can only shrug my shoulders because everything they have said, and everything they can say, will not prevent me from being what I am, and from being missed by those who have known me intimately."

On the 10th. of January 1894 the trial opened; the verdict of guilty was inevitable, the Minister of Justice, M. Dubost, wanted Vaillant's head to present to the Deputies on the reopening of Parliament. The trial was uneventful, Vaillant was allowed to speak before the prosecution summed up, and the verdict of guilty was brought ;

"M. le President, you are accustomed to presiding at assize courts. I am not accustomed to appearing before them. You will excuse me if I take the liberty of pointing one thing out to you. You have not asked me what were the circumstances which led me to commit that act. I wish to state them.

On returning from America I believed that we had to content ourselves with creating libraries to prepare people's minds for revolution. I thought that I could live fairly comfortably. My employer, profiting from my situation, would not pay me more than twenty francs a month. It was a starvation wage for myself and my children. I went and told my employer so: he answered, "I don't care a damn about your wife and children. It's you I'm employing not them!

Then I understood that I must not delay in making my revolution myself, and I took my bomb to the Chamber of Deputies.

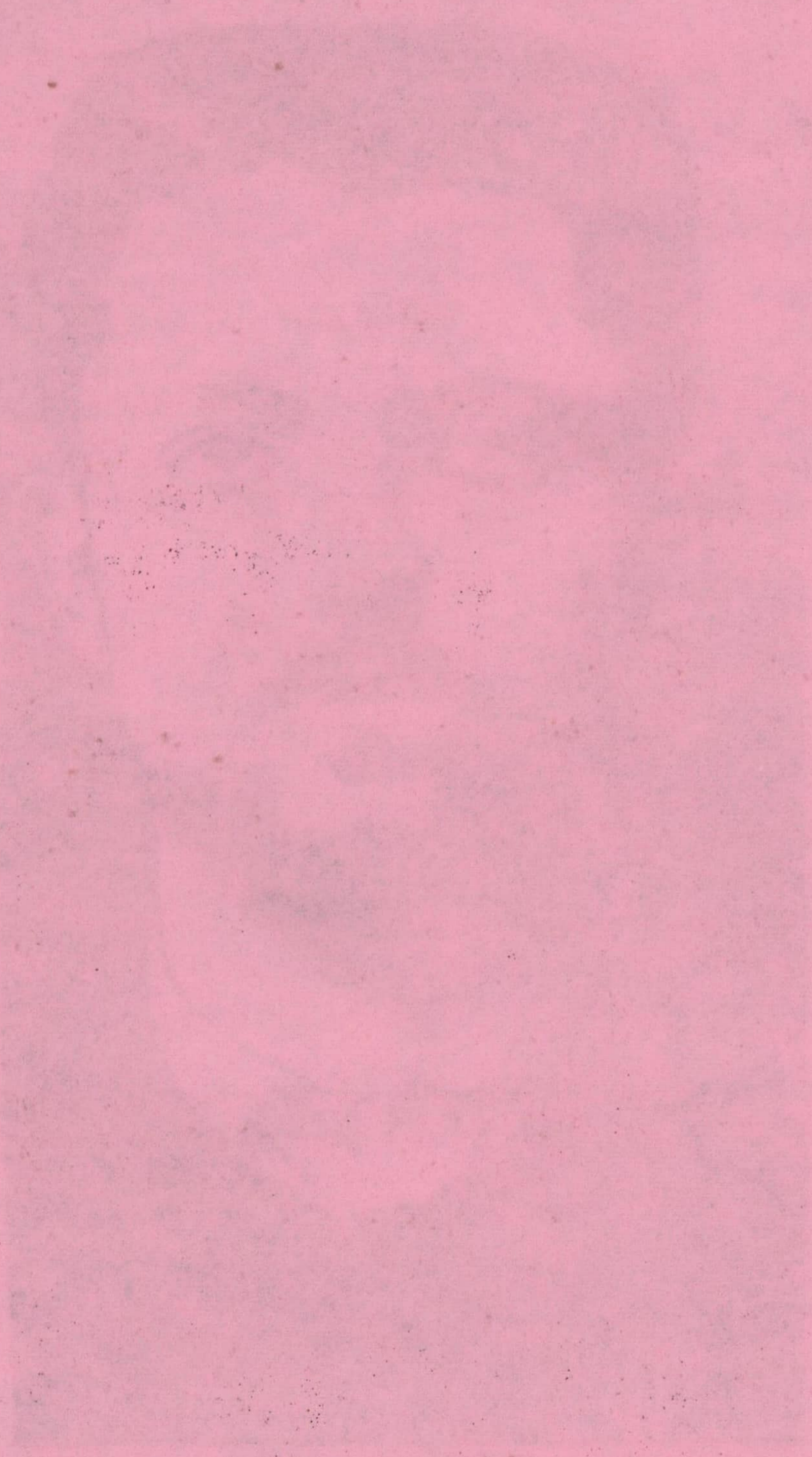
I terminate, gentlemen, by asserting that a society in which one sees social inequalities such as we have observed, in which we read of suicides committed every day because of poverty, in which prostitution flaunts itself at every street corner, a society whose principle monuments are its barracks and its prisons, a society such as this must be changed as soon as possible."

Vaillant was executed on February 6th. 1893.



EMILE HENRY

1872 -1894



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
LIBRARY

EMILE HENRY's father was a well-to-do civil engineer, who had nevertheless taken part in the Commune of 1871. A former member of the International, he was elected to the Commune to represent the 10th. arrondissement in March 1871. When the Versailles troops entered Paris, he escaped to Spain where he worked for a mercury mining firm. Emile was born in 1872, at a time when the family was quite prosperous, but soon his father Fortune's health was affected by the mercury fumes and the family returned to France in 1880, under the amnesty which had been granted to the exiled Communards.

In Paris, Mme. Henry had to work as a dressmaker to support her husband and the three children, for Fortune was too ill by that time to do the sort of work left to him. Two years later, Fortune died; his brothers and sisters who had married into rich families did nothing to help the widow and her sons, and it is from this time that Emile began to take an interest in social wrongs; he spent all his evenings in Paris at public meetings. Mean-while he was showing great promise at his studies, he gained a place at one of the ecoles superieures of Paris at the age of twelve. He took the entrance exam for the Ecole Polytechnique, when he was seventeen, but failed the oral. Instead he went to Italy with a civil engineer, one of his relations. His work was to include spying on the workers, but he emphatically refused to do this and he returned to Paris. There he began to attend anarchist meetings with his older brother. At the big public meeting in honour of Ravachol, numerous violent speeches were made, and the police decided that a few arrests were called for. Emile's arrest caused him to be sacked, his brother was sentenced to three years imprisonment.

As has been mentioned, the miners in the South of France were at this time on strike against low wages, long hours and terrible conditions. Emile, dsigusted by the way the strikers were gradually forced back, with the company more powerful than ever, formed a plan to demonstrate to society that such injustices could not go on without a reckoning. On the morning of the 8th of November 1892, he placed a bomb (the result of a keen study of chemistry) on the doorstep of the boardroom of the Compagnie de Carmaux, the industrial corporation which owned the mines, amongst other enterprises. Many of the directors were present at the meeting. Unfortunately for Henry's plans, the brown paper parcel was discovered and unwrapped, and was taken down to the local police station. A few minutes after its arrival, an incredible explosion spread the bodies of two clerks, a sergeant, inspector and policeman, over what remained of the police station.

On the morning of the 12th. of February 1894, following a logical, if extreme, train of thought, Emile made his way to the Cafe Terminus, drank a cup of coffee, and ate a brioche. On his way out he flung a bomb from the doorway into the crowded cafe. A rain of bullets flew out of the explosion, injuring about twenty people one of whom later died. Emile was pursued by two policemen, when they got too close he pulled out his revolver and fired, but they managed to capture him.

Emile Henry was tried by the Seine Assize court on the 27th of April 1894. The following are extracts from Henry's speech for his defence:

" I was convinced that the present organisation of society is bad, I wanted to fight against it with the object of accelerating its disappearance.....

I had followed the events at the Compagnie de Carmaux with great attention. The first news of the strike filled me with great joy: the miners seemed at last disposed to renounce those peaceful and futile strikes in which the striker waits patiently for his few francs to triumph over the millions of the big companies. They seemed to have entered a path of violence which was resolutely affirmed on August 15th. 1892."

"The offices of the mining company were invaded by a crowd tired of suffering without revenging themselves, and justice was about to be administered to the mining engineer, so hated by the workers, when a few timid workers interfered. Who were these men? I refer to the Socialist leaders, and to the leadership of the strike."

"A horde of fine speakers descended on the miners, who placed themselves entirely at the strikers' disposal, organised collections of money, held many meetings, gave many lectures, addressed appeals for funds in all directions. The miners entrusted all the initiative to their hands. We all know what happened. The strike dragged on eternally .. at the end of two months they were forced to return to their tombs, more miserable than before."

"It would have been simple to have attacked the company at its most vulnerable point; to have burnt all the coal stacks, to have smashed the machinery...the Company would certainly have capitulated very quickly...In short 'Law and Order', threatened for a moment, reigned once more."

"The company more powerful than ever, continued its exploitation and the worthy shareholders congratulated themselves on the happy ending of the strike. Dividends would continue to be fat for a long time...It was then that I made up my mind to demonstrate to the bourgeoisie that from now on it would no longer enjoy the delights of a bliss too perfect ...I therefore prepared a bomb. The accusation once levelled against Ravachol came back to my memory. What about the innocent victims? But the house that held the offices of the Compagnie was exclusively inhabited by bourgeois. There would therefore have been not a single innocent person in the building."

"Alexander Herzen has said, "there are two alternatives along the road to revolution: either liquidate your enemies and march forward, or pardon them and stumble half-way." We want neither to pardon nor to stumble half-way, and we will always march straight on until the revolution comes to crown our work and free the whole world. In a war without quarter which the bourgeoisie has declared on us we ask for no pity."

During the trial, Henry explained the logistics behind the bombing of the cafe:

"My intention was to kill, not to injure... I counted on fifteen killed and as many injured...no bourgeois can possibly be an innocent person... I chose (the cafe)...because it was a place much frequented by bourgeois."

There were one hundred and twenty bullets in the bomb which exploded in the Cafe Terminus, Henry had certainly intended it to be lethal. This was a qualitative escalation from the bomb which Vaillant had thrown in the Chamber of Deputies, which was filled with nails. It is not clear whether this from expediency or because Vaillant did not in fact wish to cause death. The combination of the type of bomb and the place chosen for its explosion marked the beginning of a lessening of support for such individual acts of 'propaganda by deed', which originally had a marked degree of public sympathy. Much propaganda was made by the prosecution about the injuries caused by Henry's bomb, and the fact that he had actually managed to kill one 'innocent' person (a waiter); the end of the prosecutions case was underlined by a procession through the court of the people maimed and injured by the bomb.

Henry was condemned to death, and guillotined on the 21st of May 1894.



SANTO CASERIO

1873 - 1894



SANTO CASERIO

1873-1894

SANTO TIRONIMO CASERIO was born on September 8th, 1873 at Motta Visconti in Italy. His father was a peasant, and the family of eight children shared the mother's deep religious beliefs. Santo was in the choir as a young boy. Up to the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a shoemaker, but there was little prospect of work in the locality, so he left for Milan of his own accord, and found work there as a pastry-cook. Here he became concerned with theories of social equality; he spent his time reading and arguing, and had no free time for other pursuits. By the age of seventeen he had become an avowed anarchist; his fervent devotion to this cause found parallels with his earlier beliefs.

A year later, in 1892, Caserio was arrested for distributing anarchist leaflets to Italian soldiers. He was sentenced to eleven months imprisonment. Santo managed to escape, made his way to Switzerland. He could find no work here, and having fled with no money or passport, he was arrested and transported to the nearest border, which happened to be the French one. By July 1893 he had reached Lyons, and found a job in a bakery. He could not earn much, and the few francs sent by old comrades were not enough to prevent him falling ill and having to go into hospital. His letters to his homeland were full of questions about his anarchist comrades, and news of his political activities and views, there was little room for the more personal news usual in an exiles letters, though he always wrote very affectionately to his mother.

It is thought to be at this moment, during his spell in hospital, that he first decided to carry out a momentous coup. He would assassinate President Carnot. The reason for this decision seems rather obscure; whether to avenge the anarchists guillotined by the French judicial system, when they could have been reprieved by the President, or to prove that the anarchists were not afraid to use a more personal weapon of assassination than the indiscriminate bomb, or whether to prove his own faith to himself.

On Saturday 23rd. of June 1894 the President was on an official visit to Lyons, to honour its 'Exposition Universelle'. At ten a.m. that morning, Caserio had given in his notice to his employer, and had bought a dagger for five francs. It was about eleven inches long, with the word 'Toledo' engraved on one side of the blade, and 'recuerdo' engraved on the other. He left for Lyons at mid-day, finding himself a suitable position amongst the crowd lining the streets the President would travel, on arrival. At about nine in the evening, the first troops came into view, leading the President's carriage to the Grande Théâtre.

Santo Caserio took out the dagger and made straight for the President's open carriage, as it came opposite him. As he struck the dagger into the President's chest with a single blow, he cried, "Long Live the Revolution". In the first few seconds after the blow, he managed to run around in front of the carriage; no-one seemed to have realised what had happened, Santo shouted, "Long Live Anarchism", and attempted to escape into the crowd, but the guard had at last seen what was happening, and he was seized.

Anti-Italian feeling had been growing in France at this time, as Italy had entered the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria, in anticipation of the First World War. As soon as it was known that Carnot's assassin was an Italian, the crowds became uncontrollable mobs, intent on revenge. Bands of men, women and children ran the streets, looting and smashing Italian shops, setting fire to Italian property, and violently attacking any Italians they found. The French police managed to protect the Italian Consulate building, but after a few attempts, they gave up trying to control the fury of the mobs against ordinary Italian workers. The riots went on the following day. Anti-Italian feeling and riots spread to other towns. In Grenoble, one of the most horrible incidents took place.

French workers went to an infants school, and drove out any Italian children with brute force. One was reported to have insulted France, he was murdered by the enraged mob. The police did nothing. In Lyons, the owners of factories dismissed Italian workers, and put up notices outside the buildings, saying, "There are no longer any Italians here." The flight of the Italians out of France began that day. By the 27th, over two thousand had left for their home towns; while the stations were packed with people, many of them wounded. It is ironical that when the war was sparked off twenty years later, the Italians fought on the side of the Allies.

Caserio was tried on the 2nd of August 1894, at the Rhône Assizes at Lyons. No barrister could be found brave enough to sacrifice his career by defending this man, so the President of the Corporation of Barristers was chosen. The defence was performed conscientiously, with a plea for clemency due to extenuating circumstances, but the verdict was never in question.

One of the few references to the reason for Caserio's act occurs in the following extract from the trial proceedings, in which Caserio is questioned by the presiding judge:

J. "...You are an anarchist, you hold opinions destructive of society, you are an enemy of all Heads of State and you have sworn death to the bourgeoisie. You expressed approval of the act of Henry with but one reservation, "He was wrong to throw the bomb into the cafe; he should have thrown it into the drawing-room of a bourgeois family."

C. "That it true."

J. "You said one day: "Poor Vaillant, they killed him, he hadn't killed a soul." You repeatedly said: "Nothing will stop me, neither father nor mother, and I'm going to kill a bigshot!" One day you exclaimed: "If I returned to Italy I would kill the King and the Pope."

Caserio had written a declaration of his beliefs, which a translator read, under a new law, the Judge forbade its reproduction, but in a letter to his mother is his sole remaining justification for his act:

"Don't think ill of me, dear mother. But think that if I committed this deed it was not because I have become a villain, though some people will tell you I am one... You know my goodness of heart. I still have that same heart today. If I committed this deed it was because I was weary of seeing a world so infamous."

On the 16th of August 1894, very great precautions were taken to guard the square in which Santo Caserio's execution was to take place. The three hundred police were strengthened by security police, and even a battalion of the 98th. regiment. The surrounding streets, and the roofs of the overlooking houses, were packed. As the time for the execution drew nearer, a further precaution was taken a squad of gendarmes encircled the guillotine. At dawn, Caserio was led from his cell, and died with the cry of "Vive L'Anarchie" on his lips.

After the death of Caserio, more laws were passed aimed at driving all anarchists underground, acts of anarchist propaganda were forbidden 'by any means whatever'. There were immediate results; the anarchist press was totally suppressed, and many anarchist intellectuals were arrested. The infamous 'Trial of the Thirty' in which all but three of the anarchists were acquitted, marked the end of the terrorist era, and of the panic-stricken reactions to it

THE BACKGROUND

The 'bomb-throwers' have often been explained in rather isolated terms. Some have argued that it was due to the spread of knowledge about dynamite, invented in 1868 by Alfred Nobel, combined with its increased use in industry, making it easy to 'come by'. Another explanation which has been put forward is that the actions of Ravachol, Vaillant, Henri and others, were acts of revenge for the repression of the Paris Commune of 1871; though why this revenge should be so delayed, and why it should take the form it did, is not accounted for. Yet another alternative explanation is in terms of the poverty of the lives of the particular individuals, and their reaction to it. However, the appearance of the anarchist 'bomb-throwers' in the 1890's, in France, is not an isolated phenomena. These violent acts were a reaction to the current social conditions; their cessation, to the reactions which they themselves provoked.

The acts of 'propaganda by deed' can only be understood in the context of events in France dating back to before the Paris Commune, and in the context of events in other nations at the time. But historical events and economic, political and social conditions alone, do not explain the sudden emergence of these acts; current social philosophies, themselves an interpretation to life at the time, form another strand in the interacting web. The actions of these few men, in interpreting certain aspects of those philosophies into that particular form of expression, in turn affected the development of these ideas.

What follows is the background to the lives of Ravachol, Vaillant, Henri and others. The emphasis being on social conditions, the development of working men's organisations to improve their conditions, the reactions of governments to these organisations, and the part played by anarchists and others in the situations that arose. The part played by the anarchist terrorists, towards achieving the revolution which was their expressed vision, can then be assessed.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

THE first self-proclaimed anarchist was Proudhon. In the early 1800's, Proudhon had a big influence, especially in the Lyons area. The extent of his influence can be gauged by the fact that of the five French delegates to the London International Exhibition in 1862, three were Proudhonists. These were Tolain, Limousin and Fibourg. (They believed in small-scale private property, in free credit, and the claim of each producer to be rewarded according to his works. They opposed collective ownership of the means of production - as advanced by Marx and Bakunin - and held that each producer should be entitled to the capital needed to enable him to pursue his trade, either individually or as a member of a Co-operative group. These ideas formed the basis of the Mutualist, or friendly societies, of the various crafts. These views were founded by Proudhon, in the period before this time, when production was still at the artisan level, and industrialisation was seen as a threat to the individual, or groups of individual, artisans.) Although the other two delegates, Varlin and Dupont, were respectively a Bakuninist and a Marxist, all five were artisans.

The visit was encouraged by Napoleon IIIrd., as part of his policy to win working class support, to counteract the loss of sympathy amongst the bourgeoisie. The restricted Trade Unionism accorded by Napoleon proved to create the opposite of that hoped for - the first meeting in London, led to the founding of the International Workingmen's Association in 1864; the Trade Union movement became gradually more militant, as industrial development undermined the artisan co-operatives, and when Proudhon died in 1865, Varlin, with his more bakuninist outlook, began to have more and more influence.

At the Geneva Congress of 1866, the revolutionary Trade Unionist influence, headed by Varlin, predominated over Tolain and the Mutualists. Membership of the International was on an individual basis, and at this time, there were probably only about 500 members. However, the successful involvement of the International in fund-raising and international publicity during strikes, began to take effect; increasing the size of the membership by the influx of more industrial militants, which undermined the Mutualists still further. However, with the growing influence and involvement of the International, came the end of Government tolerance. Varlin, Tolain and others were arrested and imprisoned for short periods, for their participation in demonstrations and fund-collections.

The recruitment of whole bodies of organised workers during this period, consolidated the collectivist influence in the working class movements. Many of the most prominent militants joined the Bakuninist "Alliance of Social Democracy". In comparison to the Proudhonists, the Bakuninists accepted Industrialisation, and believed in Class conflict, in a way that the Proudhonists never did, and were therefore 'Collectivists'.

In 1868 trade was beginning to revive after the depressions of 1866 and '67, and as a result there was considerable strike activity, and an increase in Trade Union membership, and in membership of the International, which now stood at about 245,000. The spread of strikes frightened the Government into persecuting the International, and also into rather frantic and desperate actions against the workers themselves; in a number of places, troops were ordered to shoot down strikers.

Just before the out-break of the Franco-Prussian War, at the Hague Congress of 1869, the real conflict between Marx and Bakunin began the split in the International, between the Marxist State Centralists, and the anti-authoritarian Bakuninist majority. Woodcock, in his book on 'Anarchism', distinguishes between these two by saying, "Marx was a centralist, Bakunin a federalist; Marx advocated political action for the workers and planned to conquer the State, Bakunin opposed political action and sought to destroy the State. Marx stood for what we now call nationalisation of the means of production; Bakunin stood for workers' control."

The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War caused a temporary pause in the growth and development of working-class organisations. With the defeat of Napoleon, the people, hostile to their government, were faced with the threat of occupation. In Paris, the situation brought together nationalist bourgeoisie and working-class militants to declare the Commune of 1871. Apart from Tolain and some of the other mutualists, the International gave its support to the Commune; indeed, many of its French members, including some of the other mutualists, took an active part: notably, *Élisée Reclus*, *Louise Michel* and *Varlin*, who was captured, mutilated and shot at the end.

The defeat of the Commune had, in many respects, more importance in determining the future than the events of the Commune itself, with its hot-pot of ideologies. The horrific slaughter of the Communards was even suggested, by writers during the period of terrorism, to have been the cause of the actions of the terrorists; the 'Fils des Fusillés', taking their revenge. In view of the fact that *Henri's* father was a Communard, the explanation is not so far-fetched. Reports of the repression of the Commune include the following,

"Dr. *Tony-Moilin* who was found guilty of having issued bread tickets during the Commune, to the starving, and was condemned to death by one of the courts-martial. He was given a day to marry his fiancée, who was pregnant, and shot the following morning."

"A fashionably dressed lady ground the heel of her shoe into the eye-sockets of a dead Federal lying on the pavement."

"The machine-gunners of *Gallifet* dispatched their prisoners in batches in batches of 300 at a time into the mass graves ready dug."

The suppression of working-class organisations; the law which banned the International as a subversive organisation, and the loss of militants through being shot, transported to the penal settlements, or escape to Switzerland, destroyed the First International. The Trade Union movement was broken. In 1872 an attempt was made to federate the Parisian chambres syndicales, as the Cercle d'Union Ouvriere ; this was immediately dissolved by the police. The Government set up a committee of enquiry into labour conditions, which sat until 1875, but received evidence from employers only ! The government even refused to allow a workers' delegation to go to the Vienna International Exhibition in 1873.

The anarchists remaining in France managed to meet in secret at Sonviller in November of 1871, and again at Saint-Imier in 1872. There were delegates from Spain, Italy and the Jura; many of the best known anarchists took part, including Bakunin, Cafiero, Malatesta and Costa. The International was re-constituted, with not a Marxist in sight ! For at this time, and until 1877, the Bakuninists commended a following far greater than the Marxists in the rank-and-file membership of the International, to the extent that Marx had to move the General Council to New York, to keep it in his hands. But the hopes of re-establishing the International were thwarted in 1873, by the arrest of activists culminating in the 'Lyons Plot' trial of April 1874. All but three of the accused were imprisoned, and the International finally ceased to function even as a secret organisation.

Social conditions at this time were very bad, as Vaillant's existence on the streets evidences.

* * *

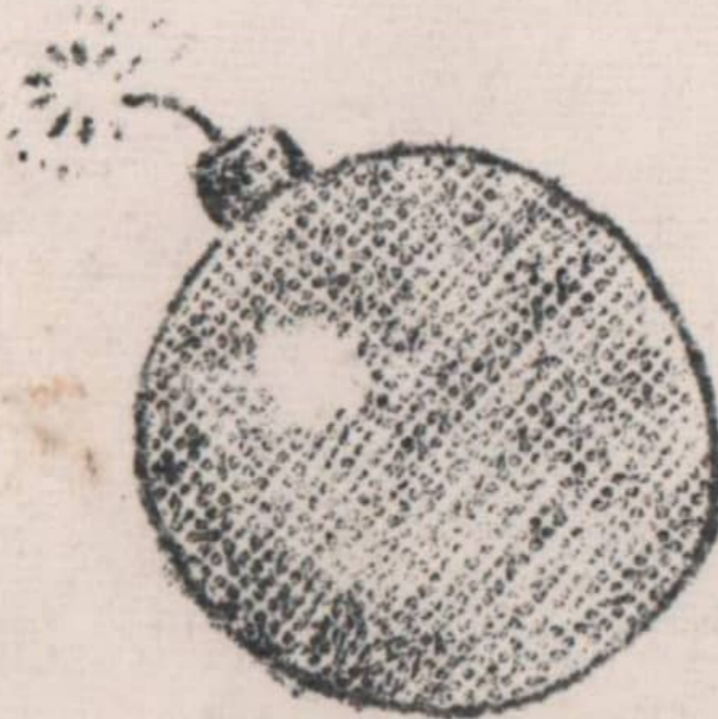
*

* *

In 1876, both Mutualists and Collectivists participated in the National Labour Congress held in Paris, in the hope of seeing the creation of a unified workers' movement, but it was organised by moderates who declared against class struggle, and for a policy of collaboration between employers and workers. Jules Guesde, an anarchist who had been particularly dogmatic in his refutation of any form of 'organisation' in the Saint-Imier conferences, but who had begun to re-align himself, supported the movement as a modest beginning of Trade Union revival. Guesde began to produce a new journal at this time, *Égalité*, which was to become one of the spurs to the reviving socialist movement.

It is during this period that the philosophy of 'propaganda by deed' began to attract attention. It was the Italian anarchists, who believed passionately in this, who initiated the acceptance of the idea in the otherwise un-important gatherings of anarchists which took place in 1876 and '77. The violence demanded by the Italians was in answer to the violence with which the Italian Government had attempted to suppress anarchists from the 1870's, whose participation in the hunger demonstrations and strikes had lead to a spreading of anarchist ideas which was seen by the Government as a threat. In 1878, a cook attempted to stab King Umberto, and this, together with a series of bomb-explosions, provided the necessary stimulus for an even greater persecution of the Italian anarchists.

The French anarchist, Paul Brousse, who with Guesde, had opposed all forms of organisation, became converted to the philosophy



of 'propaganda by deed', in 1877. He began to produce 'L'Avant-garde', which was suppressed for its extreme views in the following year.

In 1878, an International Exhibition was being held in Paris, and the second Labour Congress decided to meet there to make contact with the workers' delegations from other countries. The Government vetoed the meeting and most of the organising committee accepted the ban. Guesde and the group that had

gathered around Égalité, decided to hold the congress. The meeting was broken up by the police, and Guesde and the others were sent to prison. From there they issued a manifesto calling for a Socialist revival, and there was an immediate and widespread response. The gathering pressure was enough to sway the Government, and the amnesty for those who had taken part in the Commune, was granted in 1879. The following year many Communards returned and their influx into the Socialist movements provided strength and momentum.

In 1879 the National Labour Congress in Marseilles was already showing the Socialist trend. Its tone was Collectivist; socialists and anarchists voting together in favour of public ownership of the means of production. Jules Guesde and his followers were again in the majority, over the question of parliamentary activity. The Guesdists believed in Parliamentary activity, a principle which the anarchists could not accept. This disagreement precluded the breaking of the uneasy unity, as in 1881, the Guesdist majority formed the separate Federation des Ouvriers Socialistes de France, which became the Parti Ouvrier in 1882. The anarchists split into two tendencies in 1880, as the mutualists formed their own separate and short-lived 'Union des Chambres syndicalistes.' Strangely enough, one member of the Parti Ouvrier, was Paul Brousse, who became the leader of a dissident fraction within the Parti Ouvrier, advocating 'possibilism'; a doctrine which sought a way to socialism via factory legislation and governmental procedure!

The anarchists continued to hold independent Congresses. As before, these were notable only because they continued to uphold the principle of 'propaganda by deed'. In 1879, in an anarchist congress in Switzerland, Kropotkin was amongst those who upheld the principle, but mainly in answer to the conditions in Russia, of extreme repression, or on theoretical grounds, rather than advocating it as a primary activity.

The repeated "official" support for propaganda by deed, combined with the activities of the Narodniks in Russia, and anarchists in Italy and elsewhere, began to make 'honest citizens' and governments apprehensive about Anarchists. The fears of the citizenry were enlarged by the warnings of right-wing politicians, who saw every militant activity by workers as part of the anarchist menace. Although this hysteria may have made support for reactionary employers, from government quarters, strong enough for the use of troops against strikers, it may also have played a part in swelling the ranks of those anarchists who were involved in action with workers, with militants.

It was in the early 1880's that Anarchist-Communism emerged, which gradually developed towards Syndicalism. Emile Gautier and others, especially Jean Grave, published several important theoretical books which founded this trend. The first years of the decade were the ones in which things were really moving, ideas were becoming clarified, and this was reflected in the splits from the defensive 'unity' of the diverse tendencies which existed before this.

police agent

It was in this period of dispute and clarification and hardening of ideas, and the development of definite and viable parties, that the Paris Prefect of Police provided his agent, Serreaux, with the funds to produce 'La Revolution Sociale'. This was the first anarchist journal to be produced in France since the suppression of the Commune, which was not immediately suppressed. The journal maintained a very violent line for its year of life. It was very 'indiscrete'; publishing addresses, as well as names of groups and their leading members.

In March 1881, the Narodniks assassinated Czar Alexander II. As a result,

Kropotkin was expelled from Switzerland under pressure from the Czarist Government, since his previous support for the idea of propaganda by deed was known, although at the London Anarchist Congress in July, he had opposed the principle as inexpedient.

The London 'Black International' Congress was the real birth-place of an avowedly anarchist movement. Representatives came from the U.S.A., Germany, England, Belgium, France, Egypt, Spain, Holland, Italy, Russia, Serbia, **Turkey**, and Switzerland. Two resolutions were passed; one to set up an Information office, which fell through; the other constituted official recognition of the principle of 'propaganda by deed', as "the most effective means to emancipate the workers". (One of the most fervent advocates of this motion being Serreaux, a French delegate, and also the police spy !)

French anarchists restricted membership to men and women willing to take part in regular propaganda by speech, writing, or 'deed'. There were in the 1880's about 50 groups, with the main centres in Lyons, Paris, and also in Bordeaux, Marseilles and Saint-Etienne. The active membership was probably about 3,000, with a fringe of sympathisers. 'Le Revolté' and 'Le Père Peinard' sold a total of 10,000 copies per week by the end of the decade.

Despite the fact that the London Congress was originally called to reform the International, after a number of attempts at regional, national and international organisation, the trend towards autonomous groups became progressively strong. The anarchists in general turned away from the idea of large, working-class movements, towards that of secret groups of direct-actionists. There were no more international meetings until 1907. The isolation of the French anarchists may have played its part in the terrorist stage which ensued. Although the number of anarchists who were actually involved in terrorist acts was a tiny minority, even of the active members, the position of the movement as a whole, and the situation of anarchists elsewhere gave a general atmosphere in which the idea could take root, such that no attempt was made to analyse the use of such acts in the specific situation of France.

terrorism begins...

The first French act of propaganda by deed was the attempt to blow up a statue of Thiers, in June 1881. The Prefect de Police admitted prior knowledge of the plan, but did nothing to prevent it, and so it is not clear as to whether this first act was committed by anarchists, or by provocateurs. However the act caught the imagination of a young unemployed weaver, Emile Florian, who set out to assassinate Gambetta, the republican leader. He could not get near enough, so he decided to kill the first bourgeoisie he met. He eventually succeeded in wounding a doctor before killing himself. This slightly bizarre beginning to the events which were to terrorise French bourgeoisie, set the pattern of individual acts prompted by personal decisions. There was no anarchist conspiracy.

At this time, a particularly ruthless company which owned the mines at Monceau-les-Mines, had driven the desperate and half-starved workers out on strike against the terrible conditions, into forming a terrorist organisation. This 'Black Band' pillaged and burnt a Chapel in protest against the co-operation of Church and State with the management. Twenty-three men were arrested. Anarchists were involved in the ensuing reprisals, including the series of dynamitings of Churches and managers' houses during 1883 and '4. At the same time, a severe economic crisis in the Lyons Silk industry was causing widespread distress, and the workers finally revolted, with the help of the Lyons anarchists, including Kropotkin, against their conditions. The French Government initiated a series of arrests of 'participants of the

"insurrectional plot" ', in Paris and S.E. France. In January 1883, 65 prominent anarchists were brought to trial at Lyons, including Kropotkin and Gautier and all leading militants. Kropotkin and the others were accused of belonging to the illegal International. The main theoreticians were given 5 years each; the most active militants 4 years. It is not clear whether the Government believed in the 'insurrectional plot', or whether this was used simply as an excuse for the arrest of individuals considered to be potentially dangerous to the State. It was probably the latter, as at least one of the dynamitings was engineered by a police agent with the object of implicating suspected terrorists.

The conditions for ordinary people at this time, are shown by the story of Ravachol's dismissal over the vial-throwing incident. All working people had work cards at this time. Unemployment was high. There was no insurance. If a dismissal was recorded on the card in red ink, there would be no future employment. The loss of a job meant starvation for the worker and his dependents if no other employment could be found. In March 1883, an open-air meeting of the unemployed was held near the 'Invalides', it was broken up by the police. About 500 demonstrators, led by Louise Michel and Émile Pouget (both ex-Communards, and collectivists) carrying a flag, broke into three bakers shops in the Rue des Canettes, and helped distribute bread to the marchers. Louise Michel was sentenced to 6 years' solitary confinement, and Émile Pouget to 8 years.

In the Spring of 1884, Louis Chaves, a gardener at a Convent in Marseilles, shot the Mother Superior in revenge for getting the sack. When the police came to arrest him, he died in the gunfight that ensued. The anarchist papers all praised his heroism, but his act was not followed by another until 8 years later. The lack of terrorist acts in these intervening years, during which the life of the working people was as terrible as has been described, allowed support for anarchism to grow, as collectivist anarchists involved themselves in their strikes and disputes. The general atmosphere created was strong enough to force President Grévy to grant an amnesty to free Louise and Emile, as well as those imprisoned after the Lyons Trial, in 1884. Later in the same year, the Government passed legislation which made Trade Unions legal, for the defense of the economic interests of working-class associations.

The later 1880's were less eventful. The collectivist anarchists had, from the start, entered the Trade Unions, but at first, under the Government's watchful eye, these were reformist rather than revolutionary. The first general organisation - the Federation Nationale des Syndicats - was formed in 1886, and was influenced mainly by the marxian socialists of Guesde's Parti Ouvrier. In the next few years, the Parti Ouvrier took over control completely. In consequence more militant movements for the establishment of local federations, the bourses du travail, became stronger. The Paris Bourse du Travail, set up in 1888, took the lead, and instigated the setting up of the Federation de Bourse du Travail in 1892, which was the direct precursor of the syndicalist movement.

3 years of Terrorism -

The May Day demonstrations of 1891 were violent; 9 people were killed at Fourmies, and in the riot at Clichy Levallois, three anarchists were wounded, and arrested after a gunfight. These men were Decamp, Dardare and Lèveillé. The 8-year lull in acts of propaganda by deed was broken as Ravachol began his campaign of revenge in March 1892. His first bomb blew up the judge's house, and the second, the prosecutor's house. On the day before his trial, a bomb exploded in the cafe where he had been arrested. Ravachol was guillotined in July.

In November of 1892, the police station in the rue des Bons-Enfants was

blown up by the bomb intended for the directors of the Compagnie de Carmaux. Henri, who was responsible for this, was not arrested until 1894. The public began to get panicky at the sight of any tin discarded amongst rubbish, the houses of magistrates and judges were put under guard, and the extent of the impression created was as far reaching as to cause the denunciation of the courts by several 'ordinary' thieves brought to trial at this time. Some even deliberately sought the death sentence, which usually rewarded them with penal servitude for life.

Public fears were distracted at the beginning of 1893, by the Panama scandal, involving ex-presidents, ex-ministers, members of Parliament and journalists in the huge fraud perpetrated by the Compagnie de Panama.

This short respite was broken in November of that year, by Leauthier, when he attacked the Serbian Minister with a cobbler's knife, although he did not succeed in killing him. Then on December 9th., Vaillant threw his bomb in the Chamber of Deputies. The motivation for this act was not revenge, but to bring the suffering of working people to the attention of the whole country: it was intended as a true 'propaganda by deed'.

The acts passed by the Chambre of Deputies on December 10th, gained infamy in French political history, as 'les lois scélérates': the first made it a crime not only to incite criminal acts, but also to apologise for them; the second concerned 'associations of malefactors'. An act on the possession of explosives was also passed. On the 17th. of December, a sum of 820,000 francs was voted to the Ministry of Interior, to increase the salaries of chiefs of police of all departments.

Vaillant's bomb did not actually kill anyone, but the prosecution went all out for the death penalty. The National Press carried editorials calling for Vaillant's head. Once the death sentence was passed, socialists and many moderates began a campaign for his reprieve to be granted, by President Carnot. Some of the papers which had insisted on the death penalty changed their tune, and started talking about mercy for "the illegitimate child who, by the misfortune of his birth, saw himself the target of all the cruelties of bourgeois prejudice .. (and who) ..inspires a pity, which the arrogance of a murderer has not totally succeeded in dissipating." Deputies of various political parties sent an appeal for reprieve to the President. A group of socialist students circulated a petition round the Latin Quarter, directed to President Carnot, which the Union of Journalists supported. Hundreds of letters appealing for the reprieve were sent to the President daily.

President Carnot gave orders for the execution to be carried out on the morning of February 6th. After the execution, Vaillant's tomb became the centre of pilgrimage; queues of people filed past to lay flowers on the grave. Within the following week, the cemetery had become the scene of demonstrations. The laws which Deputies lost no time to pass after the bomb explosion, were extended to the cemetery, following the bombing of the Hotel Terminus, on the 12th. February 1894.

The activity of the police became more fervent, and mass arrests followed. On the 19th. February, there were 3 more explosions. The Government replied with yet more arrests, and searches and seizure of all anarchist newspapers still appearing. On the 15th. March, Jean Pauwels, a Belgian anarchist, blew himself up while carrying a bomb. Henri had been arrested, and was executed on 21st. May 1894.

In June, President Carnot was assassinated by Caserio, in revenge, and the idea of propaganda by such deed finally back-fired with a vengeance. In reply, a law was passed which forbade acts of propaganda by any means whatever. In August, some of the best known anarchist intellectuals were brought before the

courts, in the 'Trial of the Thirty', including Jean Grave, Sebastian Fauvre, Paul Reclus and Emile Pouget. Amongst the defendants were also 'illegalist anarchists', who carried out robberies to provide money for the cause. The prosecution hoped to tar them all with the same brush. The trial lasted for a week but in spite of the bias of the judges, the links which the prosecution had attempted to prove were shown to be non-existent. In the end, only three of the 'illegalist' anarchists were imprisoned.

The mystique shatters...

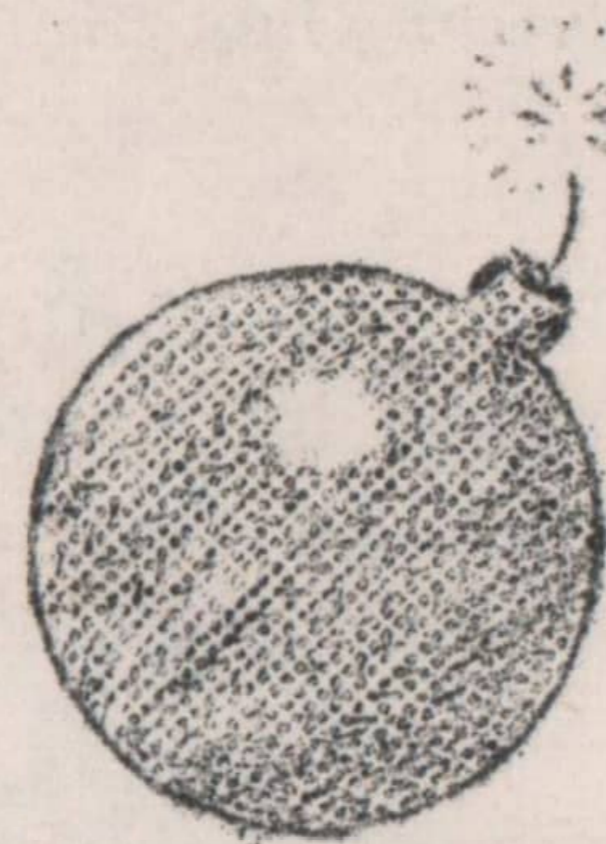
Henri's attempt to kill some bourgeois in the cafe Terminus, shocked most of the people who had previously justified violent acts of 'propaganda by deed'. The anarchist newspapers of the early 1890's had had contributions from many of the important experimental painters, caricaturists and of course writers. The attraction was not so much anarchism as such, but rather, as Mallarmé explained at the Trial of the Thirty, "a fine spirit, curious about everything that is new". The romantic mystique which surrounded the idea of terrorism, also attracted this intelligensia, until the act of Henri, and the events following Caserio's act shattered the mystique. Octave Mirbeau summed up the general feeling when he commented, "A mortal enemy of anarchy could have acted no better than this Emile Henri...".

The steady growth of the ideas of Syndicalism, based in the actions of the working class, during the period from 1892 onwards, came to flower when the mystic attraction of violent propaganda by deed was shattered. The anarchist movement from 1895 onwards was founded on more constructive forms of activity. Anarchist-communist colonies were founded in the country-side, some of which lasted into the 1930's. The movement of libertarian education led to the formation of some famous progressive schools, including the Universites Populaires, with adult evening classes.

Jean Grave started the 'Temps Nouveaux', in 1895, to replace 'La Révolte', taking a fresh direction by supporting the Anarcho-syndicalist trend. The syndicalist emphasis for the need for working men to achieve their own liberation dated back to Proudhon and Bakunin. What was original to Anarcho-syndicalism was its adaption of these ideas to the circumstances of industrial life in the late 19th. Century; making the Trade Union the centre of a class struggle, and also the nucleus of the new society. The syndicate rather than the commune was seen as the basic social unit, and the emphasis of action was on industrial rather than conspiratorial activity.

The Federation des Bourses de Travail had been 'infiltrated' by anarchists until in 1894, Fernand Pelloutier became the assistant secretary, and the following year, general secretary; while another anarchist, Paul Delesclle, was made his assistant. The anarchists managed to usurp the control of the Guesdists from the Federation Nationale des Syndicats. The formerly rival organisations held a joint congress in 1894, and in 1902 they united.

The syndicalist traditions were still strong enough, even after its demise to influence the French May events of 1968, to give them a greater potential than they would have had. The influence of the terrorists was mainly to create the myth of the Black-cloaked Bomb-clutching anarchists, so useful to Governments and employers to this day.



a quick summary...

The emergence of terrorist activities seems to be related to the frustration which the anarchist movement as a whole experienced in the period after the repression of the Commune, and before the emergence of Anarcho-syndicalism based in the realities of the industrial revolution.

The previous social philosophy of Proudhon was centred on the small, independent craftsmen: it emphasised the social form of revolution, being opposed and distrustful of 'political' revolutions and of collectivist Socialism, and of the idea of involving 'the State' in the revolution. The society it envisaged was one in which every man would own property and receive the full fruit of his own labour, either individually or as a member of a co-operative producing group. Proudhonists opposed the idea of economic equality, since they believed that each man should be rewarded according to his services. The family was regarded as the basic social unit, and hence women's labour and women's rights were opposed as destructive of the family unit. Proudhonists were very influential in the early 1800's amongst artisans, as can be seen from the make-up of the First International.

After the Commune, Trade Unions were banned until 1884, although friendly societies were tolerated so long as they were devoid of militancy; so that philosophies based on the emerging industrial proletariat could not spread beyond a minority of militants.

The anarchist movement developed violent ideas in response to the violent repression of working people in terrible poverty. Because of the legacy of Proudhonism and Bakuninism, and because all other forms of collective action were suppressed, the outlet for action tended to be in the form of propaganda by deed. In many cases this was a justifiable tactic - in that it was understood by the people who it was intended to aid, (viz the pilgrimage to Vaillant's tomb, and the unemployed demonstrators who appropriated bread with Louise Michel); but the exhortations of other anarchists from countries in which the repression was even greater, to accept 'propaganda by deed' as a principle of philosophy led to its gradual acceptance as the "only means of emancipation of the people". (At the 1881 Black International.) The use of violent acts acquired a mystique thereafter, and individuals carried out bombings of property and people, **often for motives of revenge**, which were not understood, (eg. Henri's bomb in the cafe Terminus.)

The explosion in the cafe Terminus, and the anti-Italian riots of 1894 convinced most anarchists of the 'inexpediency' of terrorist acts, and the idea lost its mystique and fascination at this time. Since 1884 the Trade Union movements, especially the Bourses du Travail, had absorbed anarchist anti-authoritarian, anti-state tendencies and interpreted them into forms of collective industrial action. With the disillusionment of the remaining anarchists with propaganda by deed as the means of achieving a revolution, the growth of anarcho-syndicalism and more constructive and realistic ideas in other fields (eg. education) ensued.

ANARCHY or CHAOS ?

I have taken the actions of the French terrorists as an example of the origin of the bomb-throwing anarchist figure. In this 'section' I hope to use this as the basis of discussion of how far such acts - also including the Angry Brigade and Weathermen activities - do achieve the aims that motivated the terrorists.

1. PROPAGANDA BY DEED AS AN ANSWER TO THE VIOLENCE OF THE STATE :-

The French State was certainly violent in France in 1871 and after. The British State is violent, now, in Ulster. The American State is violent to the negroes in its own ghettos as well as to Vietnamese. Most people would accept that the violence of the State is also shown by the very existence of police and army; that to cut school milk is a violent act: that the mechanisms of all 'States' are based ultimately on 'violence'.

Given this, the acts of the French terrorists, Weathermen and Angry Brigade, can be understood, and perhaps justified, in terms of a desperate reaction against the violent State. Reading the testimony of Ravachol and the others, one cannot but admire their stand.

However, the real question - of how far the terrorists get to realising their aims - lies not in whether other anarchists could understand their acts, or justify them, but in how much nearer 'the Revolution' their acts brought the people of France, America or England.

In certain cases, terrorist acts were undoubtedly understood. In others, they were not. Where they were understood, they centred the anger against an unjust system into a symbol of the system - eg. the Chapels Monceau-les-Mines. Where they were not understood, they gave comfort to government and capitalists by centring the anger onto themselves - eg. the anti-Italian riots. It is clear that in the former case, the Revolution was brought a fractional step nearer, and in the latter, it was pushed back. In other words, what is important is not the action, but the understanding: the consciousness: it creates.

2. POLICE PROVOCATEURS

It is not an accident that virtually all the terrorists, both the French bomb-throwers, and the American students now, have found that the most passionate advocates of propaganda by deed, are police agents, or provocateurs. Police agents were involved in the background of at least the first three of the men whose histories I have given, and there was also the influence of Serreaux. (Though I am not suggesting that every passionate advocate of propaganda by deed is therefore necessarily ...) The encouragement of violent acts as the only method of action, with no regard to the consciousness created, benefits the State in two main ways. It isolates the terrorist movement, since the State possesses the propaganda machinery, which it uses as it wishes, to spread terror of the terrorists, and mis-understanding of their motives. It also mystifies the terrorists themselves, and others who get caught up in the mystique, and closes their eyes to the importance of evaluating the effects of differing actions open to them.

Ladislav Dobor, leader of the Popular Revolutionary Vanguard in Brazil, explained why the Brazilian movement does not use bombs,

"We do not use forms of violence that can be twisted by the Government.

If the people heard that we use bombs, the Government would do exactly

what the U.S. does in Vietnam, and what the French did in Algeria. They would put a few bombs in a movie-house on a Saturday afternoon, when it is full of children. And then we would have the entire population running after us in the streets." Oct. 1970.

The control of propaganda by the State is of overwhelming significance, now that Television exists. The State has a monopoly of transmission, and hence censorship, which no left-wing newspaper today has a hope of counter-acting. The news machine can not only decide how to describe events it does read out to millions every night, it can also decide what news not to read out. It is a direct medium; present in so many homes, and much more 'real' than the printed word. It is also a more subtle medium; because it is more direct it is also more convincing, the newspaper can be read slowly and challenged - the television cannot. Terrorist acts will reach people all over the country, in 'THEIR' terms; once more giving comfort to governments and capitalists, who can teach everyone to fear and mis-understand with ease.

3 DESPAIR IS THE REAL MOTIVATION FOR TERRORIST ACTS:-

The life story of Vaillant illustrates the pessimism of terrorism;; having become disillusioned with the other peons in the Argentine; feeling that their poverty and belief in their powerlessness held them in unbreakable grip, he gave up trying to get through to people by other means, and resorted to a symbolic act to express his anger and frustration at his feeling of powerlessness. Other terrorists have shown this same desperate frustration and pessimism - using violence as a last resort, believing that nothing else could achieve anything; the Narodniks in Russia and the Weathermen in the U.S. both show this facet.

4 VIOLENCE AS A TACTIC :-

"There is nothing sacred about buildings or property, and there are certainly times when the destruction of a hated symbol of militarism or oppression can quicken the spirit and even educate the public. But are we now on a campaign to blow up capitalism, building by building, in a contest of wealth and purely physical power? Has this replaced the goal of undermining capitalism by destroying its ability to command the loyalty and labour of its subjects? ..." D.Dellinger.

When we face up to the fact that the State is always going to win in a contest of arms - by the use of the police and riot control, or the army and civil war techniques - unless we have enough people on the side of the revolution, then perhaps we will start to act in ways which are designed to create a situation, not of terrorist acts, but of guerilla warfare.

If violent actions are to be undertaken, then they should be used not because they are violent, but because they will achieve certain parts of the whole change we wish to help bring about. The pacifists are not facing reality in advocating no violence at all, any more than the terrorists are, in advocating only violence, but they have seen the danger of advocating violence against other human beings. There is a difference however, between justifying and absorbing a mystical 'violence', as part of the total philosophy, and in seeing the necessity for all kinds of actions to suit the situation in question.

I am not advocating pacifism, neither am I advocating reform. I recognise the futility of isolated actions in changing the basic nature of the organisation of this society, capitalism; I am advocating the use of any action as a tactic. The aim of which is to enlarge the consciousness of the people who are directly, or indirectly involved in it.

R.A.T.

The Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists is a part of the Anarchist Federation of Britain, it exists " to bring together the revolutionary elements in the A.F.B., to develop a more realistic theory and practice , and , to open up communication and cooperation with other libertarian tendencies."

The ORA is working for the establishment of "a lively agitational paper, under the control of its producers, writers and sellers ."

At the moment it is publishing at least one pamphlet every month as well as leaflets.

ORA 1 - 'Towards a History and Critique of the anarchist movement in recent times' . 5p + 2p postage.

ORA 2 - 'Theory and Praxis in anarchist organisation .' 3p + 2p postage.

ORA 3 - 'The Bombthrowers - a study of terrorism' . 10p + 2p postage.

ORA 4 - 'Neither Washington nor Hanoi but Libertarian Socialism' . 2p + 2p postage.

ORA 5 - 'Introduction to Revolutionary Anarchism ' . 10p + 2p postage.

ORA 6 - 'I + I = IO : Computer Ethics' 5p + 2p postage.

ORA 7 - 'Bakunin - Essays on Revolution ' . 5p + 2p postage.

for any of these pamphlets, information on ORA, details of the November Conference ; please write to :-

Ro. Atkins,
Vanbrugh College,
Heslington, YORK.