



**ANARCHISM
AND
DYNAMITE**

In 1892 over one thousand **explosions** were reported in Europe. In Paris, **bombs** exploded in the Chamber of Deputies, a police station, an army barracks, a bourgeois café, a judge's house, and the residence of the Public Prosecutor.

RICHARD PARRY. *THE BONNOT GANG: THE STORY OF THE FRENCH ILLEGALISTS*. 1ST ED. LONDON: REBEL PRESS, 1987.



Trials, by their nature, distort the historical record. The accused often feel obliged to remain silent on many things, to protect themselves and those who have escaped. If they are convicted, then prison stifles their voice and the gallows does so permanently. Meanwhile those who stayed home, who did nothing, often leap to become their spokesmen. The harder that innocence is professed or implied, the stronger the support popular pours in. And as their supporters gain standing or a platform, many find it hard not to insert their own voice, their own values, analysis, and prescriptions.

And so those who risked everything are often forced to become puppets.

The Haymarket Martyrs were murdered not once but many times. Each time that soviet tanks rolled through the Red Square on May Day commemoration, they rolled over the graves of anarchists.

But our martyrs were also defiled by liberals, who emphasized their innocence at the exclusion of their actual beliefs, and even many anarchists who felt ill at ease with our forebearers support for dynamite as a miracle of modern science that could unleash new possibilities in asymmetric warfare.

Generations of pacifists have since recoiled at the image of the anarchist with a bomb and sought to portray it as a gauche and fringe deviation. But the truth is belief in the liberating potential of dynamite was widespread within anarchism for decades, both leading up to Haymarket and following.

Here are our forebearers in their own words:

The great lesson that German socialist workers must draw from Meyer Thatache is, for the future, to preserve their individual right to self-determination against every so-called "leader." Every individual must have the right to his revolutionary action. To establish action according to its own good judgment; every independent group must have the right, on its local territory, to use poison, dagger or **dynamite** as a means of liberation... Freedom for every individual and for every group in revolutionary action, freedom of every group and every individual regarding coalition, thereby promoting proactive action and self-confidence. The power of the individual, the effect of the zeal of each individual to advance the cause through action, and what is the main thing: liberation from the leaden weight of the paternalism of incapable leaders—that is the result of an anti-authoritarian organization of revolutionary socialist workers.

AUGUST REINSORF. "ON THE ORGANIZATION." *FREIHEIT*, JULY 10, 1880.



I feel confident that a few determined men ... who are prepared to do or die in the attempt could paralyze the forces of our masters providing they were acquainted with the power which nineteenth century science has placed within their reach.

CHARLES MOWBRAY, COMMONWEAL, 1890

Let us occupy ourselves with chemistry, and let us manufacture promptly **bombs, dynamite** and other **explosive** matters much more efficacious than guns and barricades to bring about the destruction of the actual state of things, and above all, to spare the precious blood of our comrades. Courage, companions! Long Live Anarchy!

VICTOR CAILES. STATEMENT, WALSALL, SEPTEMBER 1, 1891.

FRENCH ANARCHIST, REFUGEE FROM NANTES AFTER THE MAY DAY RIOTS OF 1891

He was of the opinion that the militia and the police, well organized and equipped as they were, could defeat any attempt on the part of the populace to bring about anything by force very easily, or to quell a riot very easily; and I told him that I was not of that opinion. I told him that the views the Bourgeoisie took of their military and police, etc., was exactly the same view that the nobility took some centuries ago as to their own armament, and that gunpowder had come to the relief of the oppressed masses, had done away with the aristocracy very quickly and rapidly; that the iron armor of the nobility was penetrated by a leaden bullet just as easily as the blouse of the farmer or peasant; that gunpowder had an equalizing, leveling tendency, and that just so it was with **dynamite** at this age; that **dynamite** was a child of the same parent; that **dynamite** was a leveler; that it would eventually break down the aristocracy of this age, and realize, make democracy, the principles of democracy, a reality and actuality which they were not.

AUGUST SPIES. TESTIMONY, HAYMARKET TRIAL, CHICAGO, 1886.

Our action must be permanent rebellion, by word, by writing, by dagger, by gun, by **dynamite**... How shall we begin our action?

Just look at an opportunity, and it will soon appear. Everywhere that rebellion can be sensed and the sound of battle can be heard, that is where we must be. Don't wait to take part in a movement which appears with the label of official socialism on it. Every popular movement already carries with it the seeds of the revolutionary socialism: we must take part in it to ensure its growth. A clear and precise ideal of revolution is formulated only by an infinitesimal minority, and if we wait to take part in a struggle which appears exactly as we have imagined it in our minds, - we shall wait for ever. Don't imitate the dogmatists who ask for the formula before anything else: the people carry the living revolution in their hearts, and we must fight and die with them.

And when the supporters of legal or parliamentary action come and criticise us for not having anything to do with the people when they vote, we shall reply to them: 'certainly, we refuse to have anything to do with the people when they are down on their knees in front of their god, their king, or their master; but we shall always be with them when they are standing upright against their powerful enemies. For us, abstention from politics is not abstention from revolution; our refusal to take part in any parliamentary, legal or reactionary action is the measure of our devotion to a violent and anarchist revolution, to the revolution of the rabble and the poor.'

CARLO CAFIERO. "ACTION." *LE RÉVOLTÉ*, DECEMBER 25, 1880.

A revolution must come. There was a time when competition ground down so slowly that none noticed its workings. But now, with free schools, free press, steam and electricity, everything moves so rapidly that whichever course it takes, people see its aim and end. And when anything is moving against the rights of the majority, it will sooner or later be stopped. Whether the stopping and uprooting of a bad principle will require bloodshed depends first, on how old it is, and how much the people are receiving it as a second nature, and how much its supporters are interested in keeping it going? And secondly, how strong, clear and determined the opposition is when it begins to oppose? A weak opposition, or an opposition that is believed to be weak, will cause bloodshed, but an opposition that is known to be sufficiently strong for certain victory, will command and obtain a bloodless surrender. This is why the Communist and Anarchist urges the people to study their school-books on chemistry and read the dictionaries and cyclopedias on the composition and construction of all kinds of **explosives**, and make themselves too strong to be opposed with deadly weapons. This alone can insure against bloodshed. Every person can get this knowledge inside of one week, and a majority now have one or more books containing all this information right in their own homes. And every man who is master of these **explosives** cannot be even approached by an army of men. Therefore, bloodshed being useless, and injustice being defenseless, people will be forced to deal justly and generously with each other.

[UNSIGNED]. "A COMMUNISTIC ANARCHIST." *THE ALARM*, OCTOBER 25, 1884.

Stroll you down the avenues of the rich and look through the magnificent plate windows into their voluptuous homes, and here you will discover the very identical robbers who have despoiled you and yours. Then let your tragedy be enacted here! Awaken them from their wanton sport at your expense! Send forth your petition and let them read it by the red glare of destruction. Thus when you cast "one long lingering look behind" you can be assured that you have spoken to these robbers in the only language which they have ever been able to understand, for they have never yet deigned to notice any petition from their slaves that they were not compelled to read by the red glare bursting from the cannon's mouths, or that was not handed to them upon the point of the sword. You need no organisation when you make up your mind to present this kind of petition. In fact, an organisation would be a detriment to you; but each of you hungry tramps who read these lines, avail yourselves of those little methods of warfare which Science has placed in the hands of the poor man, and you will become a power in this or any other land.

Learn the use of **explosives**!

LUCY PARSONS. "TO TRAMPS, THE UNEMPLOYED, THE DISINHERITED, AND MISERABLE." *THE ALARM*, OCTOBER 4, 1884.

The discovery of **dynamite** and its use by anarchists is a repetition of history. When gun powder was discovered, the feudal system was at the height of its power. Its discovery and use made the middle classes. Its first discharge sounded the death knell of the feudal system. The **bomb** at Chicago sounded the downfall of the wage system of the nineteenth century. Why? Because I know no intelligent people will submit to despotism. The first means the diffusion of power.

LUCY PARSONS. "I AM AN ANARCHIST." 1886.

peace-maker; it is man's best and last friend; it emancipates the world from the domineering of the few over the many, because all government, in the last resort, is violence; all law, in the last resort, is force. Everything is based upon force. Force is the law of the universe; force is the law of nature, and this newly discovered force makes all men equal and therefore free.

It is idle to talk of rights when one does not possess the power to enforce them. Science has now given every human being that power.

ALBERT PARSONS. COURT ADDRESS. HAYMARKET TRIAL, CHICAGO, OCTOBER 7-9, 1886.



Though everybody now-a-days speaks of **dynamite**, that great force of civilization, some with awe, others with delight, it may be said that but few have any knowledge of the general character and nature of this explosive. For those who will sooner or later be forced to employ its destructive qualities in defense of their rights as men, and from a sense of preservation, a few hints may not be out of place.

[UNSIGNED]. "DYNAMITE." THE ALARM, JUNE 27, 1885.

Long live revolution! Long live anarchism! Death to the bourgeois judiciary! Long live **dynamite**!

CHARLES GALLO. CLOSING STATEMENT AT SENTENCING FOR FIRING A REVOLVER AT THE PARISIAN STOCK EXCHANGE, COURT OF ASSIZES, PARIS, 1886.



Imagine for a moment, the First Regiment practicing the street-riot drill as it was described—learning how to sweep four streets from the four corners at once. Who? The Tribune and Times say "the mob." Who are the mob? Why, dissatisfied people, dissatisfied workmen and women; people who are working for starvation wages, people who are on a strike for better pay—these are the mob. They are always the mob. That is what the riot drill is for. Suppose a case that occurs. The First Regiment is out with a thousand men armed with the latest improved Winchester rifles. Here are the mobs; here are the Knights of Labor and the trades unions, and all of the organizations without arms. They have no treasury, and a Winchester rifle costs \$18. They cannot purchase those things. We can not organize an army. It takes capital to organize an army. It takes as much money to organize an army as to organize industry, or as to build railroads; therefore, it is impossible for the working classes to organize and buy Winchester rifles. What can they do? What must they do? Your honor, the **dynamite bomb**, I am told, costs six cents. It can be made by anybody. The Winchester rifle costs eighteen dollars. That is the difference.

... General Sheridan—he is the commander-in-chief of the United States army, and in his report to the President and Congress two years ago he had occasion to speak of the possible labor trouble that may occur in the country, and what did he say? In this report he says that **dynamite** was a lately discovered article of tremendous power, and such was its nature that people could carry it around in the pockets of their clothing with perfect safety to themselves, and by means of it they could destroy whole cities and whole armies. This was General Sheridan. That is what he said. We quoted that language, and referred to it.

I want to say another word about **dynamite** before I pass on to something else. I am called a **dynamiter**. Why? Did I ever use **dynamite**? No. Did I ever have one? No. Do I know anything about them? No. Why, then, am I called a **dynamiter**? Listen, and I will tell you.

Gunpowder in the fifteenth century marked an era in the world's history. It was the downfall of the mail armor of the knight, the freebooter, and the robber of that period. It enabled the victims of these highway robbers to stand off at a distance in a safe place and defend themselves by the use of gunpowder, and make a ball enter and pierce into the flesh of their robbers and destroyers. Gunpowder came as a democratic instrument. It came as a republican institution, and the effect was that it immediately began to equalize and bring about an equilibrium of power. There was less power in the hands of the nobility after that; less power in the hands of the king; less power in the hands of those who would plunder and degrade and destroy the people after that.

So today dynamite comes as the emancipator of man from the domination and enslavement of his fellow-man. **Dynamite** is the diffusion of power. It is democratic; it makes everybody equal.

General Sheridan says "arms are worthless." They are worthless in the presence of this instrument. Nothing can meet it. The Pinkertons, the police, the militia, are absolutely worthless in the presence of **dynamite**. They can do nothing with the people at all. It is the equilibrium. It is the annihilator. It is the disseminator of power. It is the downfall of oppression. It is the abolition of authority; it is the dawn of peace; it is the end of war, because war cannot exist unless there is somebody to make war upon, and **dynamite** makes that unsafe, undesirable, and absolutely impossible. It is a