
Carnot

by Eugene V. Debs

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The President of the French Republic was believed to be a great and a good man. Under any circumstances, the civilized world would have lamented his death. But President Carnot did not die. He was killed — murdered — by an Italian mad dog, a human wild beast, an anarchist.¹ This makes the taking off of the distinguished Frenchman a horror. When a heartless despot who murders, tortures, and exiles the victims of his power, is killed, free men show signs of neither grief nor sympathy. Such autocrats are simply monsters, and the great mass of mankind breathe freer when they are dead. President Carnot was not a despot, he ruled France to the extent of the power conferred upon him by the people, and some consolation is derived from the fact that, his murderer was not a Frenchman, indication of the fact that, as president, Carnot was acceptable to France.

An effort is made to show that the assassination of the French president has no political significance, because all the crowned heads of Europe make haste to send slobbering messages of regret and condolence, as if they had been deprived of a personal friend — a royal game of Machiavelianism, duplicity, and cunning, which Frenchmen, at least, understand. France stands forth as a ceaseless menace to royalty, and all the shams and infamies perpetrated under the dogma of a divine right to rule, and it matters nothing what King Humbert² or Emperor William³ may say; they and all the rest of the crowned heads

¹ **Marie François Sadi Carnot** (1837-1894), the son of French statesman Hippolyte Carnot and grandson of a Napoleonic general, became Presidency of France in December 1887 following the resignation of his predecessor. The Moderate Republican was stabbed to death following a speech in Lyon on June 25, 1894, by an Italian anarchist, Sante Geronimo Caserio.

² **Umberto I** of Italy (1844-1900), who ascended to the throne in 1878.

³ **Wilhelm II** of Germany (1859-1941), who became Kaiser in 1888.

would I be delighted to see France again in the grasp of a revolution the result of which might be. France once more a monarchy.

It is doubtless quite true that in the work of exterminating anarchists all European nations are in alliance, because anarchists profess that it is their mission to kill them when opportunities offer, but, beyond this, there is in Europe no friendship for France. As for anarchists, they are the same, regardless of nationality, opposed to all law; they are insane enough to believe that by assassinating chief rulers and by throwing bombs they can destroy law and government and upon the ruins inaugurate chaos. They are making little headway, though they do create unrest and consternation. Anarchists have no respect for law. They are the defiant enemies of law and order, and it is here that a grave question arises. Are governments doing that which has a tendency to create a disrespect for law?

What are the facts in the United States? The press of the country is ceaselessly pointing out vicious laws, denouncing their authors, and holding them up to universal scorn and contempt. It does not help matters in the least to say — as is said, “Such things are done and said for partisan purposes.” Indeed, the fact only makes the situation worse — unspeakably worse. Not a legislature in our 40 states can assemble without being accused of bribery and debauchery. Scarcely a law is passed that is believed to be free from the taint of corruption. What is the result? It is to create a universal distrust, a deep, all pervading belief that lawmakers are debased, unfaithful, and that the laws they make are vicious. In this we have the basis of anarchism. We state the case mildly. Proof is at hand, and it is overwhelming. The US Senate, once held to be the most august lawmaking body in the world, is to day the synonym of all that is infamous. Two great trusts, that of sugar and that of whiskey, it is charged, dominate legislation, and certain senators are named as traitors to principle. What is the result? The nation is to have a tariff law covered all over with infamy, blotched with bribery, and universally condemned. Anarchists despise law— all law, good and bad, and, blinded by hate of bad laws, they are unable to discover the good in any statute, and condemn the entire code. It could scarcely be expected that anything better could result when the press of the country, secular and religious, independent and partisan, is ceaselessly condemning law and the administration of law.

Recently, in the state of Indiana, a national bank was wrecked, and hundreds of depositors were reduced to poverty. The President, a

representative Christian in a great church with two steeples, confessed his guilt. He had robbed his depositors of at least \$800,000. He lived in clover a foot high. His home was palatial. He had stolen it from confiding men and women. The law fixed his penalty at from two to ten years in the penitentiary, and the judge who sentenced him to six years almost choked with sympathy when sentencing the old scoundrel. When he arrived at the prison there was another exhibition of profound sympathy, in which the warden made a consummate ass of himself. And, mind you, the palatial home of the hoary old thief had been transferred to Mrs. Bankwrecker, while widows and orphans, in their rags, in silence and sorrow, witness the game of law in which a rich and religious thief wins the pot. Men look on, and noticing how differently a poor devil who has stolen a coat or a side of bacon is treated, silently and sometimes vociferously curse such exhibitions of administration of the law. And prudent men say, "Such things are well calculated to make anarchists."

In connection with this case of bank wrecking were two prominent business scoundrels who aided the president of the bank to wreck it and get away with \$125,000. They were, like the president of the bank, pillars in a fashionable church. They were found guilty. The trial developed that they were a brace of polished, cultured, intellectual, religious scoundrels. They gave liberally of their swag to aid in building up Christ's kingdom on the earth, they owned aristocratic pews in the sanctuary, they contributed liberally to pay the priest's fat salary. Two more rascally religious disciples never paid tithes, or made long prayers, but they were found guilty. One was sentenced to ten, and the other to six years imprisonment. Over these two miscreants the divine who practiced theology for their benefit broke down and went all to pieces. He followed the convicts into court, into jail, and into the penitentiary, and sobbed like a water plug all along the line. But the religious rascals had to go to the penitentiary, had to have their heads shaved, had to be measured, numbered, weighed, and photographed, wear stripes, dine at the *table d' hôte*⁴ and sleep in a cell; but here again the prison officials exhibited their asinine qualities of head and heart, and expressed regret that they could not be treated in a way more becoming their social status. Men looked on in wonder and disgust. They saw that, even in a penitentiary crime did not level down; that an educated, cultured, religious scamp, creature saturated

⁴ *Host's table.*

with villainy, had a better show than a poor devil, who, instead of stealing \$325,000, had stolen only \$3.25. Such things bring law, and the administration of law, into contempt, and are well calculated to produce anarchists. But this is not all of the shameful business. The two religious rascals, having lots of money saved out of the \$325,000 stolen from the bank, could employ high priced attorneys and at once a scheme was set on foot to get the rascals out of prison. They had been fairly tried before an honest judge and by an honest jury, had received their sentence and were incarcerated. But that amounted to nothing. There was a higher court, and after a few days of consultation the scamps came out of prison, gave bonds, and are as free as other rascals who have served full time. Here again the common people denounce such laws and such court proceedings — their indignation is righteous. They say “such things make anarchists,” and they tell the truth. If it is desirable to arrest the growth of anarchism it would be well to put a stop to practices sanctioned by law which create anarchists.

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