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In Defense of Heroic and Expropriating Anarchism

Renzo Novatore

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July 7 1923

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there are some of the “guilty” who deserve it even more than the innocent!

“Guilty” should be for us synonymous with *Best*.

And one of the best, among us, was precisely De Luisi.

His life in the last several years is a heroic poem and only art could tell its beauty and sing the great — if still dark — epic...

You who live on the fringes, remember him! You have lost in Him one of your best brothers: one of those who pointed out — through the example of action — the paths of that radical and deep rebellion that is peculiar to anarchist negators.

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lice searches that actively sought him for a robbery of several hundred thousand lire that a state employee went through several years ago, as well as a revolt, gun in hand, in a Torino bar against police agents, many of whom were left seriously wounded, while a comrade of De Luisi — Milesi — was killed by the police in the same battle.”

And here it is necessary, for once, to render our sincere homage to the hired press which — with obvious intention of depicting De Luisi with the menacing colours of the dangerous criminal, have managed to give us an almost exact profile of the daring rebel.

Yes, De Luisi — who several years ago was still guilty of being an (honest) railroad worker who organized his co-workers, teaching them the word of liberation, when — for this “offence” — society first threw him in prison and then denied him work and threw him to its margins as insane rubbish, at which point he accepted the glove of challenge and on the margins became a hero!

A hero with a heart full of strength and love, a hero who was able to bear hunger and all privations rather than lowering his dignity to small and easy prey, a hero who was always able to give his solidarity — with passion — to comrades less daring or less fortunate than him; a hero who, with a hundred like him, would have devastated a regime. He loved danger like a brother and had in his soul the force of a thousand audacities.

And now that a vile Judas Iscariot has sold him to the black police of Turin and has had him buried — perhaps forever — in the darkness of a cell without him at least being able — for the last time- to sell his freedom at a dear price, we have the duty not to forget him.

It is necessary to rip off, once and for all, the lying mask that too many of us still keep glued to the face and recognize in him one of our best. No more of the rude comedy of our solidarity only with the “innocent.” If the innocent deserve it,

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bury the corpse of his dead illusions, he rose in the new dawn with all the violence of an implacable challenge.

And it was Him. He was a whirl... A Sign! A cloud heavy with storm — a lightning bolt that illuminated the path!...

His new life was like a mountain wind when it comes out from the mysterious chaos of its deep caverns to fertilize the virgin light of the dawn, with the furious and roaring embrace of his vigorous and stormy nature, to annihilate himself in the titanic effort of creation and then calmly disperse himself in the infinite...

And it is from the creative effort, celebrated with iconoclastic ritual in the sacrilegious temple of the broadest and truest *freedom* by these superb Heroes of Unbelief, that the new *Good* and *Evil* flows, like streaming blood, that we are writing on the bronze tablets of new human values.

And it is on the granite boulders of these new values that arises the glorious and triumphant phosphorescent arch of our instinctive Anarchy, tragic synthesis of Strength and Reality, Beauty, and Dream!

X

“He, De Luisi Giuseppe” — says the black news of the Torinese newspaper of last September 26 — “was not one of the usual robbers from the outskirts who, ragged, and barefoot, confront the first passerby, pillage him of a hundred lire, go to a filthy dive in the company of the first prostitute that ends up in their arms to quickly help them consume the miserable fruit of armed robbery and to later denounce them to the police who in their turn rush to take them out of circulation and confine them in jail. No, De Luisi was a new Bonnot, perhaps more clever, who organized colossal robberies in the very center of the biggest cities and then withdrew in the guise of an unknown to live his life, laughing to himself at the vain po-

And the Joy and Sorrow that come from this fertile, creative embrace celebrated with iconoclastic ritual in the sacrilegious temple of the broadest freedom are the Good and Evil on which is raised the triumphal arch of our supreme anarchy, synthesis of Strength and Reality, Beauty and Dream.

Life, for us, is a wild flower that has to be cultivated on the frightening edge of immeasurable abysses.

IX

In the hellenistically tragic soul of our comrade De Luisi Giuseppe, all three anarchist reasons — the ethical, the heroic, the aesthetic — named above had to stormily wander about there, condensed together forming a single and unique sparkling element that made of him — child of the night — a Demon-god of audacity and will, enthusiasm, and might. The enchanting God of Ryner's wise parables who shouts: "I love you and want you, oh my *necessity!*" must have spoken to him in the silence of this deep and fearful night in which his soul found itself suspended between a dawn and a dusk, between a death watch and a mass of redemption.

That night in which — hounded, disappointed, starving — he retreated into himself for a solemn revision of his way of feeling and operating.

He saw the masses that he loved, and that he wanted to redeem with his blood, passing before his sight as a long line of cowardly and vile sheep that never rise up and that when they rise up, they rise up only to find a new master before which to be able to bow their heads. And while one voice rose from the depth of his spirit howling: *Futility!*, another voice still more powerful rose from the guts of his darkest instinct, wildly called him back to the joy of intense living. And he obeyed this last voice and, digging a grave in the evening to

Crime is the vigorous manifestation of the full, complete, exuberant life that wants to freely expand itself and rejoice beyond every rule and boundary, not recognizing obstacles either in persons or in things...

And it is precisely this, this aesthetic side of crime, that redeems it, exalts it, and raises it into the clear and sparkling light of a genuine work of art.

T. Brunetti

I

The black news of the Torinese newspapers of last September 26 had to and wanted to concern itself with the capture of five of our best known comrades who fell into the slimy clutches of the police while — according to "precise information" that reached the same — went out in a "very elegant car" well armed with bombs, Brownings, and magnificent machine gun-pistols to carry out a ... "job" of two hundred and more thousand *lire!*

This is, in a short summary, the substantial content of all the long, endless columns of rude and vulgar prose pompously embroidered of cop-like tall tales published by the Torinese newspapers of last September 26, about the daring failed "job".

The comment — our comment — on the event in Torino taken in itself is this: "The Torinese police were themselves the ones who organized the "job" through a sinister agent provocateur — the chauffeur who drove the "incriminated" car — with the goals of glory, career, and cash."

And our comment is based on facts and evidence. Facts and evidence that, furthermore, cannot be missed by any of those who, reading the news of that day, saw in what way the "daring" (sic!) capture of the five anarchists happened...

II

Aside from the fact that the five comrades of ours who fell into the vile and infamous trap set for them by the police are really victims of the Judas chauffeur who betrayed them and sold them out, among the five there was also the beautiful and virile figure of De Luisi, romantic and passionate character of the rebel and hero, whose life is all a poem of daring battles and conscious rebellion, which perhaps very few anarchists have been able to write factually in the book of the life they lived.

Comrade De Luisi Giuseppe was — after all the bitterness, disappointments, and struggles experienced in the midst of the crowds — a terrorist and an expropriator. And today it is of him that I intend to speak here. Of him and the expropriating principle of heroic anarchism.

Many comrades will not approve of us, many others will not understand us, it's quite true, but from our point of view this is not a sufficient reason to persuade us to silence our iconoclastic voice, to break off our unbridled cry, to chain the wrists of our rebel thought.

We are neither madman nor idiots, but we are anarchists and anarchists of a good start.

III

Some people — many, too many people who act as *militants* — this inappropriate and anti-anarchist word — in our milieu and who enjoy this privilege — a poor and sad privilege — of being considered by most — most, even in our milieu, alas! are unfortunately a herd — as the sole, unique, true guardians of the divine fire that burns and sparks on the mystic altar of the sacred Vestal Virgin, of Saint Anarchy — have already been barking for a long time, for much too long a time, that the dark era of heroic anarchism is now fortunately surpassed, that the time

And like the German poet and D'Annunzio's hero, so the anarchist cries. Because the anarchist is a vigorous child of life who redeems crime, exalting — with this — his Mother.

VIII

What does it matter if today, yesterday, and tomorrow, morality — this malign and dominating Circe — labels, labelled, and will label as “sin,” “sacrilege,” “crime,” and “madness,” the heroic manifestation of the daring rebel who decided to rise above every crystallized social order and every pre-established boundary, who wants to affirm — through his own might — the unbridled freedom of his I, in order to sing — through the tragic beauty of the deed — the full, anarchist greatness of all his individuality fully liberated from every dogmatic phantom and from every false social and human convention created by a most deceptive and repugnant morality before which only fear and ignorance bow?

Good and *Evil* as they are valorized by the vulgar herd, and interpreted by the people and by the rulers of the people, are empty — if still frightening — phantoms against which we turn, with full and mature consciousness, all our sacrilegious irreverence made up of Stirnerian logic along with the roaring, superior, serene laughter of the wise man Zarathustra.

On the tablets of new human values we are writing with our blood — which is the volcanic blood of Dionysian and innovative Antichrists — an other *good* and an other *evil*.

Who doesn't know it?

We are like the wind of the high mountains when it comes out from the mysterious chaos of its deep caverns to fertilize the virgin light of the dawn with the barbarous, furious, and roaring embrace of its vigorous and stormy nature, to later annihilate itself in the titanic effort of creation and disperse itself into the infinite.

VI

If anarchist philosophy — which proclaims the autocracy of the individual over the oligarchy of phantoms — has its phosphorescent roots embedded in the casing of the deepest, most mysterious human feeling and quenches its thirst at the immortal springs of human thought, it still has its green, luxuriant foliage up in the heights, in the glory of the sun where it sings, amidst the contrasting uproars of the winds, the tragic beauty of its heroic and reckless protagonists who have their feet in the guts and their brain in the sun of the idea.

And this is why, aside from the two reasons mentioned, a third reason of a higher order serves to defend heroic and expropriating anarchism: an aesthetic reason!

In fact, the “anarchist of the deed” is such a marvellously suggestive and terribly fascinating figure, whose mysterious, complicated, and deep psychology has been of use to not a few geniuses of tragic art as godlike and creative material for heroic poems overflowing with healthy immortal beauty.

And since there is not incompatibility between crime and intellectuality — Oscar Wilde says — it is logical that “anarchist crime” cannot and must not be looked upon by anyone as anything but a crime of a higher order. — Material and property of tragic art. — Not “black news” to satisfy the greedy and monstrous appetites of the crude and bestial, fatally corrupted herd.

VII

If I have committed a crime — Wolfgang Goethe cried — *that crime would no longer deserve this name.* And Corrado Brando in *More Than Love* says: *If this of mine is a crime, let all the virtue of the world bow down before my crime.*

has finally come to no longer let ourselves be dominated by the dark and tragic shadow of Henry and Ravachol, that Jules Bonnot’s rebel automobile was only a sad and tragic expression of anarchist decadence condensed in a certain intellectual degeneration of bourgeois morality; that theft is not and cannot be an anarchist act, but rather one derived from bourgeois morality itself; that...

But what’s the use of going on? Let’s stop here!

IV

There are three reasons, for us, that serve to defend the terroristic act and individual expropriation.

The first is of a social, emotional, and human order and embraces theft as a *necessity* for material conservation of that individual to whom, though having all the predispositions of the sacrificial animal ready for any sacrifice and any commitment, society equally denies the most miserable means for an even more miserable existence.

For this individual, who the sadistic and lewd society is amused — through the macabre games of its bestial perversity — to confine ultimately to the last stages of human degradation, Enrico Malatesta himself — who cannot be accused of having a pagan, Dionysian, Nietzschean concept of anarchism — allows that theft, besides being a right, may also be a duty.

But truthfully, to allow this kind of theft, it seems to me that there wouldn’t even be an absolute need to be anarchists.

Victor Hugo, Zola, Dostoyevski, Gorky, Turgenev, Korolenko, and a whole long royal court of romantic and realist, humanist and neo-christian artists and poets have allowed, explained, and justified this kind of theft around which they have even created genuine masterpieces of art and beauty in whose pages the most lyrical of all human pity throbs and vibrates.

And it isn't just artists, poets, and novelists who explain and justify it, but the famous jurist, Cesare Beccaria himself, after having recognized that *laws, in the present state, are only the hateful privileges which sanction the tribute of all to the rule of the few*, affirms that *theft is not a crime innate to man, but rather the expression of poverty and desperation, the crime of that most unhappy portion of human beings to whom the right of property has granted nothing but a cruel existence*.

Over this first reason for theft there is therefore no need – we believe – to linger along, demonstrating what now no longer needs to be demonstrated.

We can simply add that for the man to whom society denies bread, if there is a *crime*, it is precisely that of not stealing, or not being able to steal.

I know, there are unfortunately still malignant derelicts with a human semblance, who exalt and praise the “great” **virtue** of the “honest poor.”

They were – Oscar Wilde says – the ones who deal by their personal account with the enemy, selling their rights as first-born for the vilest plate of bad lentils.

To be poor – and “honest poor” – means, for us, to be enemies – and the most repugnant enemies – of every form of human dignity and every higher feeling.

What can an “honest poor man” symbolize, if not the most degrading form of human degradation?

V

War is another thing. I am by nature warlike. To attack is among my instincts. So said Friedrich Nietzsche, the strong and sublime bard of the will and of heroic beauty.

And the second anarchist reason that serves to defend the terroristic, expropriating act is a heroic reason.

It is a heroic reason that embraces theft as a weapon of power and liberation that can be taken up only by that daring minority of exuberant ones who, while belonging to the class of discredited “proletarians,” have a vigorous and lively nature, rich in free spiritedness and independence, who cannot accept being chained in the shackles of any slavery, whether moral, or human, or social, or intellectual, and so much the less, economic slavery, which is the most degrading, most mortifying, most shameful slavery, impossible to bear when healthy, leonine, and throbbing blood pulses through the veins; when the tragic flashing of a thousand impetuous storms thunders in the mind; when the unquenchable fire of endless renewal crackles in the spirit; when the shadows of a thousand unknown worlds sparkle in the imagination; when the quivering wings of a thousand unsatisfied yearnings beat in the flesh and in the heart; when the heroic thought that burns and destroys all human lies and social conventions flashes in the brain.

And these tiny, exuberant, and daring minorities, Dionysian and Apollonian by nature, now satanic and now godlike, always aristocratic and unassimilable, scornful and antisocial, are the ones who, invaded by the anarchic flame, form the great perennial bonfires where every form of slavery is burnt up and dies.

And these mysterious and enigmatic, but always anarchic, natures were the ones who, willingly or unwillingly, wrote with letters of blood and fire, passion and love, the glorious and triumphant hymn of revolt and disobedience that breaks rules and laws, moralities and forms, pushing crude and heavy humanity forward along the dark path of the centuries, toward free human life together, which perhaps these anarchist heroes no longer believe in; they were always the blazing torches that cast the phosphorescent light of a new life into the dark social shadow; they were always the great heralds of the revolutionary storms disrupting every social system in which every free, uncastrated individuality felt itself odiously suffocating.