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Léo Taxil  
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Speech given at the Salle de Prado in Saint Etienne  
April 10, 1880

Retrieved on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 from [https://www.marxists.org/  
subject/anarchism/taxil/war-clericalism.htm](https://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/taxil/war-clericalism.htm)  
Originally published in *Plus de Cafards!* Paris, Bibliotheque  
Anti-Clericale. Translated by Mitchell Abidor

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## War on Clericalism

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Citizens:

A bishop who is blind both morally and physically which doesn't prevent him from preaching the virtues of the waters of Lourdes while not himself using them (*laughter*); who inundates France with insulting little pamphlets in which he attempts to soil the Republic, but which doesn't prevent him from going to that Republic's cashier in his position as canon of Saint Denis and guardian of the tombs of the kings of France – though there are no more kings in France (*renewed laughter*) – M. de Ségur, to not give his name, wrote an infamous work entitled: “The Freemasons, What They Are, What They Do, What They Want.”

We in turn will study together this question: the Jesuits, what they are, what they've done, what they plan to do.

This is a burning question of the moment.

To the applause of all of France the democratic government that leads us just a few days ago ordered the dispersal of the Jesuits. It must be recognized that this measure is insufficient, but it's a first step, it's a first satisfaction given public opinion.

Be sure of this: others will follow.

For my part, though from a political point of view I differ a bit from the men in power I have to recognize that as concerns the clerical question the majority of the ministry does what it can.

We voters don't have the right to reproach it for not doing much, for if our ministers have the failing of only advancing after a thousand hesitations, we for our part have had the no less great failing of attaching to our rulers a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies which are no doubt filled with good intentions but which are totally lacking in energy (*Bravo! That's true!*) You have seen this on various occasions, notably a propos of the failed attempt to prosecute the men of May 16 and also a propos of the measure of appeasement and clemency that all generous hearts demanded.

But let's leave all this aside.

I have not come among you to put the Chamber on trial: that would mean putting ourselves on trial, since it is we who elected the Chamber (*A voice: Alas!*) What is more, I don't think it wise in politics to pass one's time in recriminations about *faits accomplis*.

When voters have deputies they are not happy with they only have themselves to attack. They should profit from the experience and if they don't feel their representatives are good they should find better ones. All of this is simple and elementary.

The ministry must take into account that until now universal suffrage has not been called upon to specifically pronounce itself on the clerical question.

The upcoming elections will revolve around this and if, as I am firmly convinced it will, the country shouts out with the voice of the ballot boxes: Death to clericalism, the government must then decide to exterminate the monster (*Prolonged applause*).

At this time the Jesuits have been called on to disperse and, as I said in the beginning, that measure was received with joy by all Frenchmen. Yes, by all Frenchmen, for the clericals, the only ones who cry out against the ministry, are not Frenchmen (*Bravos*). They are bad citizens; they are the same people who refuse our valiant and beautiful Paris the title of capital. For them Rome is the capital:

And this is so true that in order to combat our enemies you don't found anti-Jesuit schools, you found secular schools. It's not the parish priest's cassock you oppose to the Jesuit's habit, it's the school teacher's frock coat that you oppose to all cassocks (*Applause*).

My sentiments are thus in conformity with yours when I cry out: War on clericalism! War on all forms of clericalism!

We have seen what the Jesuits are, what they have done and what they want to do. We have seen what the clericals say: "We are all Jesuits."

Our obligation is greater than ever.

In three months the Jesuits will be dispersed. It is necessary that on October 14, 1881 the country vote in an anti-clerical Convention whose mandate shall be the total extermination of the enemy (*The speaker descends from the tribune amidst the most enthusiastic universal acclaim*).

The sectarians have reached the first of their goals: they have gradually invaded all of catholicity. Everything that believes or claims to believe in the Immaculate Conception belongs to them.

And now, at the very moment when they have confiscated to their profit all ecclesiastical power; at the moment when they pretend to crown their labors by subordinating the state to the church, since the church is Gésu and is finally putting its hands on civil power, at this very moment the Republic burst forth, causing a complete change in spirits. And now the anti-clerical impulse of the nation is so strong that the government is obliged to give it satisfaction, however small it might be, while waiting for the great day of the general elections, the great day of the final disembarassing (*Applause*).

The Jesuits, that is the clericals, feel they have lost. They see the tide rising every minute. They can count the hours and calculate the precise second when they will be drowned.

They cry in fright to Chambord, a cry of despair. But if Chambord is physically crippled, he is morally deaf (*Laughter*). Chambord can't hear them. Chambord is a prudent man who sees that he has other things to do than to drown along with them. Henri V understands but one thing: if by some miracle he were to climb the throne he would be caught between the guillotine of Louis XVI and the dagger of Henri IV (*Applause*).

This, citizens, is the precise situation.

It is a good one for we republicans, but with one condition: we have released the waters that will swallow up the Jesuits. It is necessary at present that the inundation continue. The locks should not be closed before all is done (*Prolonged bravos*).

The entire clergy has on its own lined up on the rock where the too generous government had isolated the Jesuits. Too bad for the clergy! We must respond to their threats by the suppression of the religious budget (*Yes! Yes! Bravo!*)

The fight is no longer between the *philosophes* and the Jesuits, as in the last century. It is between civil and ecclesiastical society.

Rome, the most corrupt city of the universe. Rome, which popes and bishops turned into the clergy's house of ill repute (*Applause*).

You no doubt have heard about the adventure of one of our generals. It was during the occupation under the Second Republic. The general, who commanded the French troops, remarked to a cardinal that his soldiers were lacking in companions and asked him where certain ad hoc houses could be found. The cardinal, who knew the city of the popes well, answered, "But general, your soldiers don't need to look for what you're asking about: all our houses are good for that. All your soldiers have to do is enter any one of them" (*Laughter*).

This then is the capital of clericalism. Rome, the city of mire. Rome the impure city par excellence; the city where all the Catholic rot and refuse goes to drown (*Bravos*).

When a class of men like the clergy is gangrened from top to bottom; when from the Borgia pope to the Ignorantine Brothers and country priests who encumber the benches of the assizes courts: when a party has become an immense cloacae of abominable obscenities it is right that it finds Rome its fatherland. Rome is its fitting fatherland (*Applause*).

It is in Rome, incidentally, that the leader of the Jesuits, who are our subject today, lives.

One day, it was August 15, 1534, a madman and scoundrel, a certain Ignatius Loyola, gathered around him in Paris, in the underground chapel of a convent in Montmartre, a handful of men worth no more than he.

These adventurers, these bandits of the faith, said: "We are unknown and we want to fill the world with our name. We have neither power nor credit and we want peoples and kings to obey us. We have neither money nor possessions and we want to own all the world's gold. We are rejected by the fair sex who are repelled by our villainy and we want to suborn with impunity women and young girls. We are evil-doers to whom the gallows already reaches

out its threatening arms and we want naive populations to place the haloes of saints over our heads when we die.

“What must we do to accomplish all this?”

“We must first organize ourselves into one band which, in the eyes of the vulgar public, will aim at the sanctification of souls, but which will secretly only work for material and universal domination.

“All means to achieve this will be good. Our goal justifies all of them: theft, seduction, illegal arrest, murder, we will engage in all crimes. And this band of rascals, debauchees, swindlers, thieves, and assassins we will call The Society of Jesus.” (Salvo of applause)

These first affiliates of the band thought that hypocrisy was the mask they needed to hide the crimes they contemplated. Under the misleading appearance of virtue they hid their baseness and their revolting vices. As you know, Jesuit has become the synonym for a hypocrite. (*Laughter*)

Above all they had to impose themselves on the masses in order to better exploit them.

They had to cover each of their vices with a contrary virtue.

Proud, they took a vow of humility. Avid for domination and disposed to revolt they took a vow of obedience. Lechers hunting for naïve women and inexperienced girls they took a vow of chastity. Devoured by the thirst for gold they took a vow of poverty.

Wretches capable of all crimes in the disguise of honest men: that is what the Jesuits are.

What have they done until now?

Read their history. It is written in filth and blood. (*Bravos*)

Eight years after the creation of their band the Jesuits were already the cause of disturbances in Paris. Twelve years later, that is only twenty years after the oath in the cellars of Montmartre, the *parlement* of Paris found it necessary for the first time to order the expulsion of these scoundrels.

But the Jesuits weren't men who would so easily renounce France, that rich prey they coveted.

These beings are like bedbugs (*Laughter*). When they are hunted and they feel they aren't the stronger party they flatten themselves and slide into the cracks in the walls. They disappear. People think they're gone, but this is a mistake. They are still more present in the house, it's just they are huddled in their holes, they're hidden in the corner where they can't be reached. They patiently wait in the shadows the moment when they can leave their hiding places without danger and once again bite and drink the blood of their victims (*Applause*).

In 1554, at the time of their first expulsion, the Jesuits were not as powerful as they are today. They had not yet populated the army and the government with their creatures. The magistracy was not devoted to them. On the contrary, they hunted them down (*Bravos*).

How did the Jesuits conduct themselves? They withdrew into themselves, flattened themselves. And when they felt the storm had passed one of them quietly left the convent that served as his asylum and in honeyed tones protested his devotion to French royalty and, kissing the monarch's feet, solicited the revocation of the decree that banished the band from our territory. The king of France was naïve enough to believe Father Lainès. Oh credulous kings of France! Several of them would later fall under the blades of the Jesuit assassins...

Once upon a time there were distinctions. Once upon a time the bishops of France separated their cause from that of the Jesuits and didn't want to be confused with them. Once upon a time Cardinal Frédéric Borromée drove the Jesuits from the college of Breda. Once upon a time the pope solemnly pronounced the suppression of that accursed company.

Today everything has changed. The simple faithful, priests, bishops, cardinals, and the sovereign pontiff are all the vassals of Loyola. It is no longer Leon XIII who is leader of the Church, it's the black pope.