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Letter to Pierre Monatte

Marie Guillot

1914

St. Martin d'Auxy, December 29th, 1914

Dear friend,

I just received your manifesto.

I very much agree with you on the mistakes committed by the Confederation Committee. The last one may be the most incredible of all. Do enlightened revolutionaries not know that the working class, more than any other class, are paying for this disaster? Are they not able to understand that a country like Germany cannot be annihilated and that war can only exasperate the faults of its public opinion, supposing that the Germans are more blind than we are? To make the revolution, to free a people from tyranny with cannon fire, this is the whole 1793 ideology which reappears here. We know how this ends. The Germans are good to free themselves; and peace will put better weapons in their hands than war. Let's do our work which is to develop the organisations of struggle, and let's leave our neighbours do theirs. People say: "If we do not defeat Germany, we leave it the possibility to take its revenge." Let's imagine Germany is defeated (could it be more defeated than France in 1870, and can we prevent a nation which wants to live to be reborn from its ashes?), okay, let's admit it

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is. Chances of war will in no way be reduced, they will only be moved: the centre will be at St. Petersburg and London instead of Berlin and Vienna. Capitalist chaos still has bright days to live. And the best, and quickest, despite its extreme slowness, way to avoid wars is to kill capitalist society, to install a social justice regime, where economic rivalries are replaced with international economic calculations.

When I read what L'Humanité makes its readership swallow – but, believe me, they don't all digest it and people will be held accountable – I moan about this new socialist mentality. It is a return to ancestral brutality: let's beat them up and kill them to bring them freedom. We can only wonder: is it madness, stupidity, or braggartism?

The duty of workers' organisation was to do all they could to prepare peace: that will be enough work already. And we shouldn't have discouraged the neutrals in their effort of working-class humanity and clear-sightedness.

Maybe a neutral who we do not worry about enough, cholera, will come and make everyone agree. And, in the springtime, maybe a peace of cholera will be signed, like the Turks and Bulgarians had to sign. But, then, there won't be many of our guys left to count.

As for the causes of the war and its responsibilities, it is too soon to tell: they are in the end economic, I know, and each country was carrying its burden. Everything will become clearer after a few years of peace, and our duty will be to inform the working class at large, in order to make people understand that, as always, the awfully tragic joke is on them.

The C.G.T. will need a strong purge. And Merrheim and the others should not follow you; we need, on the inside, some good pilots to parry as best as we can.

Your resignation, as much as it is useful to attract the attention of the groups, must remain an only case; the other comrades will only have to approve your reasons – at least, that's

my advice. Let's not drown everything, the rescue operation would be impossible.

My best to your wife and yourself. When is this Council? That is the sword of Damocles which just won't fall...

Marie Guillot