

# **My Testament**

**or, Society of Avengers**

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

1845

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Summary of principles, facts, and complaints, against the exploiting caste.

Exhortation to the proletariat to organize and take action against their oppressors, by any sort of means, until the avengers take a hand, and justice is done.

To write slowly and in my own hand, 25 copies, to be distributed and disseminated after my death.

To write down clearly the principles of economic right.—Bring out above all those that make up the right of the masses and guarantee leveling;—collective force, gratuity of public services, determination of values;—assurances;—corporations; marriage; family; land-rent; state; taxation; general disarmament.—

Right of revendication,<sup>1</sup> by secret judgment; and of execution.—

Recall the principles concerning war, penal law, regicide, and insurrection.

Such acts are never good in themselves: on the contrary, they are only rendered excusable in certain cases. The political offense, so casually dealt with, is an offence: but it can be the case that the provocation being such, the greatest part of the fault is with the prince, or [ ], and the right is with the rebel, or tyrannicide.

So repeat this phrase often: What you will do, by acting as I recommend to you, will not be pleasant; but yours will be a case of legitimate defense, legitimate vengeance; you can be excused.

This:

1. Exposition of the facts: situation of the laborer and the privileged; social iniquity in economics, politics, taxation, etc., etc.
2. Exposition of the rights: what may be. Forms of redress to be carried out, reforms indicated, practical, simple, and forbidden.
3. Theory of revendication by force: war, insurrection, tyrannicide, and secret vengeance.

The time has come to organize those things.

By the fact of the publication of this Testament, the Society of Avengers exists. Never gather. No need of secret meetings, rolls, papers, or offices. You have principles, a law, a faith, a hope, wrongs to avenge, the world to save, and your dignity to safeguard.

Your right, invincibly established, clearer than the precepts of the Decalogue, is confirmed by the refusal of discussion, la proscription directed against the writer who, for twenty, 30, or 50 years, has wanted to proclaim it.

Today, all politics tends to the glorification of immorality, to impunity for theft.

There is no more remedy; it is necessary to strike.

To distinguish the innocents from the guilty....

To limit oneself to a single sort of communication between supporters: that the principles are true, that the right is certain, that the oppression is flagrant, and the vengeance excusable.—Certain that these ideas exist, the strong and heroic man, who feels he has the power to cut down an enemy, has only to seek some endorsers, some accomplices: when he has them, let him act.

Never strike any but public, notorious crooks; principal agents of the system, bigwigs....

To commence operations when the Testament has been read everywhere.

Collect and classify a mass of misdeeds and crimes, and show in what sense it is systematic.

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<sup>1</sup> The right to assert a claim, to demand restoration.—Translator.

Atrocious [ ] of the worker; degeneration of the races.—Corruption of women and girls.—Strike down all these great culprits.

The sensual, selfish, obscene life of the exploiting aristocracy.

Games, dances, concerts, spectacles, feasts [ ] to all tastes; rest, pleasure, the seven deadly sins and all their progeny; that is what they cultivate. The institutions have committed them to the guard and management of an immense capital, [ ]; ils ne domptent qu'à la [ ]. Like [ ], whom I cite in my notebook, they only exist for [ ] and [ ]. Their maxim is that of Sardanapalus: Drink, eat, play and f..

It is necessary to exterminate [ ]. They are fattened for the sacrifice, said [ ]. It is time;—whoever adheres in their heart to the principles contained in this Testament, is part of the Society of Avengers; they are [ ].

Also, do not forget the reprisals.

Every culprit struck should be a notorious enemy of the Revolution, and bear on their corpse a sign that indicates that they have been sacrificed by an avenger.

Every prosecution directed against an individual as a suspect of having, for this reason, struck a great criminal, will give rise, if it ends in a conviction, in reprisals.

If the killer has been seized in flagrante delicto, and if it is proven that the individual is an avenger, he should be released under penalty of reprisals practiced as much against the judges, imperial prosecutors, public prosecutors, examining magistrates, as on the jurors.

— Some will rail against the society.—Let them rail.—The grievances are there; let them refute them.—The principles are there;—let them recognized them.—The reforms are there; and [manuscript breaks here.]

## Overview of the innovations and reforms.

Main points, easy to remember, on which the Revolution must first of all undertake and finish in less than three months.

1. Public debt.—bankruptcy of  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; reimbursement of the ruined, interest reduced to  $\frac{1}{2}$  %.
2. Expropriation of Grandes Compagnies.—Liquidation, on the same principle.—[ ] of the great [ ].
3. Bank.—Reduction of interest to  $\frac{1}{2}$  — 1%.—Confiscation du capital.
4. Dette hypothécaire.—Reduction of 50%.—[ ] like the debt.
5. Rente foncière.—reduction of land tax:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the *rente* of property;  $\frac{1}{3}$  to [ ] ;  $\frac{1}{3}$  to the State. Domain congéable.
6. Loyers.—reduction de 50 p.%.—Organization of its maconnieres.

[7 more points ; to be transcribed]

By what sign shall we recognize that an individual who has been struck has been struck by the society of avengers: if notorious depraved, or corrupt, or criminal, or villain; if an enemy of the people; if of a political importance that corresponds to their criminality; if a sign is left on

the corps; if they are not stripped or robbed; if no author of the murder can be assumed from self-interest, rivalry, etc.

All these signs may exist together, or only exist in part.

– Classification of persons to be harmed.

In the government, the administration, the police, the magistracy, the clergy, finance, industry, commerce, property, the army, la [ ].

Ten or twelve classes in all.

– How, in each class, to choose the subjects to strike.

There are men of good faith everywhere.

We must not forget that a provisional order is necessary to society; we can suppose that every public functionary who only fulfills their duty according to the [ ] is inoffensive, and consequently innocent.

The same in property, etc.—Inequality is universal; all have wished it; lui [ ] the [ ] liberals, good people.

But add them, the [ ], the impious, the enemies of morals and liberty, devoted as [to] infernal gods.

The vengeance will stop when political liberties are established, and the Right [ ] unique [ ] (in seven or eight articles.)

## **Order and distribution.**

Legitimate complaints of the proletariat, starting from the birth of the socialist schools; bloody reaction, of the bourgeoisie; massacres, despotism, tyranny, transportation, crimes; under the Empire as well as under the Presidency and Cavaignac.

General economic principles, in the name of which we make our demands.

(Critique of the principle of property;

Law of collective force;

Theory of interest, discount, credit, taxation, and international exchange.

Church, army.

Principle of Human right, immanent.

Series of reforms, to be accomplished immediately.

Means of constraint.

Around one hundred pages, at most. Autographic reproduction, with 25 or 50 copies (25 to my friends as gifts; 25 to reliable people, who will reproduce it.)

Results of that economic revolution: Everything is renewed from top to bottom. Customs changed; poverty abolished; true liberty, internal and external, established; equality created; labor organized.

## **Justice.**

The just man has a right of life and death over the criminal, the father over the rebellious child, the husband over the adulterous wife and her accomplice, the brother over the immodest sister and her seducer, the citizen over the traitor and usurper.

Every citizen is a censor of customs, a guardian of peace and order.

—à fonder : Federations;  
Universal suffrage;  
The mnémosyne ;  
The judiciary.  
(The mnémosyne pour le cas dû pas d'autorisation.  
Thus, we will make a monthly column for politics and political economy.  
It will be weekly for everything else.  
Do not forget the courts.

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or, Society of Avengers  
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