

## J'accuse!

### Friedrich Adler's Address in Court

#### I.

In the first place I must oppose the legend that has been woven about my person. I recognized from the beginning that my act would be attributed to a temporary state of mental aberration. I was prepared for the cry of the whole press that only an insane man could have done such a deed at a time when all the rest of the population was in complete harmony with the regime of Count Stürgkh.

I expected that the press of the government Socialists in Austria as well as in Germany would try to cast me off as one who had lost his reason, and I have since, after I have had the opportunity to see the Berlin *Vorwärts*, read, under a great headline, "The Deed of a Maniac," what they have had to say about it. The *Vorwärts* at that time had already been endowed with an editorial department favorable not to the working class but to the government. I was, of course, prepared for the repudiation of the Vienna "Arbeiter-Zeitung" and its attempt to line up all the psychological moments it could find to prove that I had not been in complete possession of my mental faculties.

I desire to declare that I deny all responsibility for any statements made here by my attorney and that I am determined to oppose, most emphatically, any attempt on the part of my counsel to present this plea in my favor. It may be the duty of my attorney to take care of my body but it is my duty to protect my convictions which are more important than the *hanging of one man more in Austria during the war*. The case is a much more serious one than that which is engrossing my attorney here. I desire, therefore, to say from the start: I did not commit this deed in a fit of mental darkness, but after ripe consideration; I have considered it for a year and a half, have weighted all its effects, from every side. You see it is not a deed inspired by the moment but a premeditated act, undertaken and carried out with the fullest realization that with it my life is

closed. When I entered this house in October I was convinced that I would not leave it alive. I was certain that in view of the political situation of that time there could be but one end, that the court before which I was to be tried could pass no other sentence than one of death by hanging. And I beg of you, much as you may have to bear from me, to be convinced of this, that I shall say not one word to hinder you from passing the only judgment that you as a special court can pass, yet I am convinced, were this a jury trial, I should perhaps look forward to a different judgment.

I am by no means inclined to overestimate the institution of trial by jury but I do believe it possible that the natural feeling of justice of people who have only to decide according to the lights of their conscience might find its expression here; you, on the other hand are placed here, not to decide according to the dictates of your conscience, but according to the cold letter of the law.

I harbor no delusion, therefore, and will certainly not attempt to overthrow this judgment; on the contrary, I will do everything to make it clear that there can be no other judgment.

First I should like to speak for a moment of the indictment rendered by the public prosecutor that was read here. When it was first read to me in November I laughed aloud at the point where it says, "The use of murder as a political weapon can hardly be a subject for discussion among ethical people, in an ordinary state of society." The prosecutor has set himself an easy task, to be sure. He passes lightly over the real problem, in a sentence, by inserting the premise. I agree with the State attorney that in an orderly state of society murder cannot be a political weapon.

But the premise, which is here to be proven, is the question as to whether we are living in an orderly state of society.

And right here the whole matter assumes an entirely new character. I will not go into the question as to the ethical character of our ruling powers. That is a moral question. I will confine myself to the wholly concrete problem, "are we living in an orderly state of society." Out of this question arises my moral