

EDITORIAL

MODERN “WITCHES” HUNT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LAZARUS AVERBUCH may have been an Anarchist. The story of Chief Shippy may be true. But certain it is that the “evidence” in the case, so far published, is of the fishiest. If Chief Shippy was assaulted he did what was right. But no one, who will refuse to allow his judgment to be stampeded, will fail to see in the present so-called chase after Anarchists something that vividly recalls the hunting of witches in the Dark Ages of superstition—with all the craftiness that lay behind the motives of the promoters thereof.

Begin with Chief Shippy’s own story. He was greatly surprised to hear that anyone had called for him at his house in the evening. This “highly suspicious” circumstance put him on his guard. When Shippy opened the door the next morning to Averbuch and saw him, he looked to Shippy “like an Anarchist.” The pictures one sees and descriptions one hears of Anarchists represent them as unkempt and wild looking men. The police accounts themselves of the man who “looked like an Anarchist” are to the effect that he was scrupulously neat and natty, a description totally at variance with that, given in the same report, of another “Anarchist who threatened the



Chicago detective holding up the dead body of Lazarus Avenbuch.

Mayor.” This other “Anarchist” was shabbily dressed. According to Shippy’s own story, no sooner had he concluded that the man to whom he opened the door “looked like an Anarchist,” than he fell upon him, “grabbed his arms and forced them behind his back.” Of course, no one but an Anarchist would resent such brutal and

sudden treatment. A tussle ensued. Shippy killed Averbuch. With the man's lips sealed his story was safely locked; moreover, after that anything could be found in his pockets—circumstances all of which "clearly denote an Anarchist plot to kill the Chief."

The fishiness of the affair does not end there. Subsequent instalments of the movements of the Chicago Police and further evidences of the "Anarchist plot" are in line with the first. A policeman, in the act of using the telephone, accidentally makes a discovery. His line having become crossed with one over which someone else was talking, he overheard a man's voice say: "For God's sake, get out of town, they are on." What a curious coincidence. Thereupon, and guided by just those words, the policeman proceeded to the shop of the talker, and lo, there he found another "Anarchist or Socialist."

In the Dark Ages the burning of witches was brought about by just such methods. Some crafty fellow had an interest in playing upon popular credulity. The most incredible stories were set afloat. The more incredible, the more readily believed—and a witch was burned in public, and somebody else, in private, had his account therein.

The Chicago reports bear all the evidence of credulous people being rattled by inventions from crafty sources. The circumstance that these yarns frequently couple Socialism with Anarchy, the further circumstance that from South and North, West and East reports come in announcing police intimidations of public meetings—all combine to justify the theory that the present outcry, raised against "Anarchists," is but a crafty campaign inaugurated against free speech, against popular and legitimate agitation to enlighten the people concerning the deplorable condition that one half at least of the speakers in Congress are at this very time declaring that the people find themselves in.

Socialism spurns Anarchy both in point of theory and in point of methods. The Socialist execration of "Anarchy" is a logical result of the Socialist execration of Capitalism—the breeder of Anarchy, being the simultaneous breeder of popular ignorance and popular suffering, which, like powder and fire in contact, produce blind explosion. But with all his detestation for Anarchy, the Socialist will not stand silent by without denouncing the infamy of re-galvanizing in modern shape the

Dark Ages persecutions of "witches."

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