

EDITORIAL

RUSSIA'S LATEST MESSAGE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“THE Case of Azef” is meat for thought; for plenty of thought; for thought, and thought again.

The man who enjoyed the reputation of an arch revolutionist; who had to his “credit” the murder of a string of notabilities, Grand Duke Sergius among the lot; the sincerity of whose purpose seemed seasoned by “martyrdom in Siberia”; and who, after all, is now known to have acted, step by step, in obedience to “orders from above,” instead of, as supposed, in obedience to “orders from below”—such a man is a monumental figure: the message that he sends to the American Movement is not the least important, or least timely of the many messages that are pouring in out of Russia.

The popular conception regarding the police spy, or “agent provocateur,” is that he simply eggs on unbalanced revolutionists to deeds that lead to their own undoing. The “case of Azef” opens wider vistas. Like the moon, which shows only one face to the earth, manipulators of the “agent provocateur” allowed him to show only one side of his make-up. The other side is now discovered. The “agent provocateur” has a double mission—to rid Usurpation of the “pestiferous revolutionist,” and also, to rid Usurpation of bothersome fellow Usurpers. The well managed “agent provocateur” accomplishes both ends—he accomplishes the one by accomplishing the other. It is now evident that Grand Duke Sergius, Von Plehve, Sipiaguine, Rogdanovich, and, who knows how many others! were distasteful branches to the trunk of the Czar’s regime. They seem to have absorbed sap that the trunk preferred to have absorbed by itself and some other pet branches. The distasteful branches were to be pruned off. The direct process would have raised a scandal. An indirect process was preferable. The physical force revolutionist afforded the means. These means were seized.

The story is told of a fight having once broken out in the gallery of a New England theater, and the rioter being seized and about to be thrown down into the pit, a nasal voice was heard shouting above the din: "Don't waste him! Don't waste him! Drop him on a fiddler!"—"Don't waste the harebrained physical-force-only revolutionist! Don't waste him!" was the word of command that issued from the expert and experienced headquarters of the Czar. "Drop him on some bothersome Grand Duke, or on a Von Plehve to whom we owe too huge a debt of gratitude!" The command was obeyed—and the pure and simple Russian physical force revolutionist died bravely on the gallows taking unto himself the flattering unction that he had dealt a blow to the Czar's regime, while, in fact, he was himself turned to profitable use by the Czar's regime itself, who did not allow him to be wasted, but dropped him upon the Grand Dukes Sergius and the Von Plehves, as occasion demanded.

The United States is more like Russia than the superficial veneer indicates. Russian conditions are becoming American. More than any other, these two countries throb to the ferment of popular upheaval. In the nature of things the phenomena in Russia have, or are beginning to have their replicas here.

"Look out! On your guard against the American Azefs!"—such is the latest message wafted to us from Russia to the ear of the militants who have ears to hear and minds to discern.

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