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EDITORIAL

THE SHOOTING OF ROOSEVELT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“I N a dream I saw President McKinley set up in a monk’s attire, in whom I recognized Theodore Roosevelt. The President said:—“This is my murderer. Avenge my death!””

These words, found in a note in the pocket of John Schrank, the would-be assassin of Col. Theodore Roosevelt, sufficiently tell the tale. President McKinley in a monk’s attire, in which very attire Roosevelt is recognized at the same time that the President points at him as his assassin—lo a confused picture that can find lodgment only in an unhinged brain. Further testimony from Schrank himself gives the clue to the source of his insanity: “I was in the saloon business with my uncle in New York, when Roosevelt was Police Commissioner. Roosevelt closed our saloon and I have hated him ever since.” The closeness of the parallel with Czolgosz is striking. A disappointed office seeker at McKinley’s hands, Czolgosz sought to dignify his hatred by douching it with a political flavor; a probably ruined ex-saloon keeper, ruined under the Police Administration of Roosevelt, seeks to dignify his animosity by shooting “a man who seeks a third term as President.”

It should not be—it is not necessary, under such circumstances, for the Socialist to disclaim any share in the assault. The title of Socialist, given to Schrank by some papers, is disproved by the news that the identical papers publish. Nevertheless, at such tragic moments as this, well may the Socialist be excused to point with pride to the fact that assassination, so far from identifying the assassin with, discloses the wide and deep chasm that separates him from Socialism, and the short bridge that connects him with Capitalist philosophy.

Differently from Capitalist philosophy which attributes causal powers to the individual, Socialist philosophy teaches that causal powers lie with social systems. As a consequence, Socialist philosophy cauterizes the evil spirit of personal revenge,

while Capitalist philosophy fosters the feeling. While Socialist philosophy turns the mind to the healthy and invigorating channels of mass-action and institutional activities, Capitalist philosophy narrows by fixing the mind upon the unhealthy and unnerving channels of individual action upon individuals. While, accordingly, Socialist training uplifts the mind above the petty sentiments of hatred and revenge, Capitalist philosophy forces the mind down to the sentiments that nurse personal, actual or imaginary, injury to the point of driving the victim to seek personal revenge.

As the bomb that blows up one Tsar only crowns his successor, leaving Tsarism intact, so the shot that kills one living spokesman of capitalism only makes room for another, leaving the capitalist system untouched. Socialism wastes not its energies upon consequences. A superior, a loftier dispensation, Socialism reserves all its energies for the Cause—the social system of economic despotism which to overthrow, and make branch-and-root work of Socialism husbands its forces.

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