

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 209.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1910.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE SECRET POLICE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the course of the short address delivered by Vladimir Burtseff at the Grand Central Palace on the evening of the 21st of January, he said:

“Russian conditions make the Secret Police issue the most prominent one that we have to deal with in Russia. One spy, the Zhuchenko woman, for instance, operating in our ranks, frustrated for many years all revolutionary activity. The Secret Police is the heart and soul of the Czar’s Regime. That destroyed, the whole Regime will tumble down.”

It is no figure of speech to say that here in America also the Capitalist Regime has its Secret Police. It is no figure of speech to say that here also the Secret Police is a leading issue. Nor would it be much of a strain to say that, here also, the Secret Police being destroyed the whole regime would tumble down. Nevertheless, the conclusion would be wrong that the methods and means demanded for Russia are the measures and means demanded for America. In the difference of the conditions of the two countries lies the difference of means.

In Russia the Secret Police arises from the circumstance that the Revolution has no means other than secrecy to combat the Czar’s Regime. A Free Press and Free Speech being excluded in Russia the Revolution is compelled to work underground. Underground methods invite underground counter methods—and there you have your Secret Police.

Otherwise in America. Here Free Press and Free Speech are in force. Here, accordingly, secrecy is unnecessary; the Revolution, not being driven underground, it is not forced to resort to the methods that invite underground counter methods. Here accordingly, the Secret Police is not a natural product. Yet it exists. Why? It exists for the simple reason that in but too frequent instances the revolutionist in America acts as if he were in Russia—wraps himself in secrecy.

In Russia, as in America, the Secret Police must be torn down. The parallel ends there. In Russia, differently from America, the Revolution requires a Burtseff to paralyze the malignant outgrowth of Russian conditions; in America, differently from Russia, the Revolution calls for conduct that of itself takes away the occupation from the Secret Police, to wit, an open, over and above board policy. With nothing for the Secret Police to betray that the Revolution does not itself publish and proclaim in the open, the Secret Police of America would vanish as the pest microbe vanishes with sanitary conditions.

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Uploaded January 2011

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