

THE PEOPLE

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RAVACHOL

With the conviction of Ravachol, the police-made Anarchist plots, that have been dished up to the European public during the last month, will probably come to an end. But this end is in fact the real beginning of the fiendish scheme which the capitalist class of continental Europe has put upon the stocks, and of which the recent plentiful “discoveries” of bombs, the explosions, and the Anarchist scare raised by the police were the necessary precursors.

In the Spanish Cortes, Deputy Martos declared the Social Question was assuming such ominous proportions that a large military force would be needed to keep the people in check. This incautious deputy blurted out the sentiments which the more cautious members of his class throughout Europe refrain from expressing, but obedient to which they are, nevertheless, acting in concert. In this, the capitalists of France have taken the lead. Not a military force alone, they realize, is wanted. It may be too late, should it come to that: the army, after all, is recruited from the people, and the temper of the army, after the butcheries of Fourmies of last May Day, has not yet been forgotten by the ruling bourgeois of France. Its instinct correctly guides it to perceive that, so far from being the best, it may be the very worst strategy to rely upon the military force to check the oncoming social uprising. The beat of the drum may conjure up the revolutionary spirit of the people, and the game would be lost before it was begun. The civil arm of the Government, however, is not quite as much open to such danger. Civil measures of repression could be carried on upon a gigantic scale, and persecution even, cloaked by law, could be indulged in to a large extent with comparatively little risk. The only thing requisite to this end is a popular sentiment in its favor; and nothing will produce the sentiment as well as a popular panic, a popular sense of danger from secret, invisible sources, not reachable by every day means.

Ravachol, together with the explosions that preceded and followed his “capture,” were the requisite means to attune the people to the desired pitch.

He played his role well and earned, no doubt, his wages. His conduct from first to last was masterly. Not a word or an act but was well calculated to inspire the wildest fears. Upon what he said and did, together with the outside stage setting in the conduct of the police, from Brussels down to Madrid, the capitalist government of France can and will now base a system of repression and persecution, gigantic in its proportions. This may be now looked for at any moment.

Nor is this all. Ravachol will not be in confinement long. He will “escape.” The simple-minded and deluded, but only sincere, members of the Anarchist groups will soon see him in their midst again. To their eyes he will return with the halo of martyrdom around his head. He has earned his spurs and their confidence by having been “convicted”—and the police will derive the full benefit of these improved relations.

But all these schemes will be futile. Tyranny, however much seconded by treason, never yet could cope with intelligent revolution.

[Transcribed by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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