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A Moderate Socialist Office-Holder

By Thomas Leaderless

ON August 26, 1917, an Italian priest named Guliani, held a religious meeting on the corner of Bishop and Potter Avenues, Milwaukee. Italian workmen, living in the neighborhood, who listened to what Guliani said, resented some of his remarks and heckled the priest. As a result of the heckling Guliani terminated his meeting but promised to return the following Sunday.

On Sunday, September 2, Guliani, with his followers, appeared a second time at the same corner. Some of the Italian workers who had resented the priest's remarks the previous week were again present and again objected to Guliani's statements. The priest was forced to close his meeting and went off, announcing however, that he would come again with police protection.

On the following Sunday, September 9, Guliani appeared for the third time at Bishop and Potter Avenues, accompanied by police. This meeting terminated in a riot at which revolvers were used. When the shooting was over it was found that one of the Italians who had had the altercation with the priest had been shot dead, another of them had been wounded so badly that he died an hour later at the hospital, and two policemen had been slightly injured.

As a result of the shooting, eleven Italian workers (10 men and 1 woman) were taken into custody and finally held for trial.

On November 30, five weeks after their arrest, District Attorney Zabel, Socialist, came out with his charge against the eleven defendants which read as follows:

"I, Finfred C. Zabel, District Attorney for Milwaukee County, hereby inform the Court that on the ninth day of September in the year nineteen hundred and seventeen, at the said County of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the said defendants Peter Bianchi (here follow the names of the other ten defendants; being then and there armed with dangerous weapons, to wit: loaded revolvers, did then and there with force and violence in and upon one Albert H. Templin, Paul J. Weiler, Joseph H. Rydlewicz and John F. Weselowski, make an assault with intent then and there to murder them."

Now what was some of the evidence brought forward by Socialist District Attorney Zabel to convict those eleven Milwaukee workers of the crime of "Assault with Intent to Murder," a crime, by the way, not found on the statute books of Wisconsin? I shall here give samples of testimony as found in the official minutes of the trial.

John F. Weselowski (police officer), on Stand.

District Attorney Zabel, questioning the witness.

Q.—Where did you find this picture? (Picture of Karl Marx.)

A.—In the hall.*

Q.—The picture with the red flag on it?

A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—Hanging in the hall?

A.—Yes, sir.

(Picture offered and received in evidence.)

Q.—Did you find any American flags or drapings in that hall?

A.—No, sir.

Q.—Find any picture of George Washington, or Wilson, or any President of the United States on those walls?

A.—No, sir.

Q.—Where did you find the picture of this gentleman?

A.—It was found in the hall at 300 Bishop.

Q.—Do you know who he is?

A.—It was supposed to be the murderer of the Italian king.

Court.—Strike that out.

(Picture received in evidence.)

Q.—Where did you find this picture—Louis Ling, August Spies, George Engel, Adolph Fisher, Haymarket anarchists, Chicago?

A.—Yes, sir; that was found in the club room, 300 Bishop.

(Offered and received in evidence. Objected to

as incompetent, irrelevant and immaterial. Objection overruled.)

Q.—Where did you find the picture of the tomb of the anarchists?

A.—300 Bishop.

(Picture offered in evidence. District Attorney introduces 129 books and pamphlets. Objected to as incompetent, irrelevant and immaterial.)

Court.—Gentlemen of the Jury, all these pamphlets and papers are received for the purpose of throwing light, if any, on the subject of conspiracy.*

Joseph A. Rydlewicz (police officer) on stand.

Rydlewicz—I found this I. W. W. membership book and button in the trunk of Vincent Fratessi. (Received in evidence and marked Ex. 22.) I found this membership card in the name of A. Fratessi in another trunk in the home at 239 Bishop. (Membership and button received in evidence, and marked Ex. 23.)

Frank Calabro, witness for defense, cross-examined by Zabel.

Calabro—I don't belong to the I. W. W., but have been collecting for them. I have been circulating the subscription list for the Haywood organization of the I. W. W. (Circular marked Ex. 61.) I didn't admit to Weselowski that I paid \$2.60 a month to the I. W. W., and sent no money to them.

(Objected to as immaterial.)

District Attorney Zabel—It shows the attitude of certain of these people toward the government.

(Motion that the remark of the District Attorney be stricken out.)

Court.—The remark was addressed to the Court. I will receive the paper for the purpose of showing his interest in the I. W. W.

G. A. Lizzi (State witness) on stand.

G. A. Lizzi—The picture of the person in the upper left hand corner of Ex. 26 is Gaetano Bresci, an anarchist, the man who killed the king of Italy, Humbert I. The picture to the right is Antonio Dolbar, an anarchist. The four gentlemen in the picture below Bresci are four Japanese anarchists, and the five to the right of the Japanese are George Engel, Adolph Fisher, Louis Ling, Theo. Spies and A. R. Parsons. Above these, at the top we find "1887"—"There will be a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today." In the middle is a picture of Francisco Ferrer, at the left hand corner a priest, representing him as the assassin of Ferrer. The man with the long beard is Emilear Ciprani, who has been in prison in Italy several times as an anarchist. The man with the glasses to the right is Angelio, an Italian anarchist and the man with the cap in the lower left hand corner is Michael Bakunin, a Russian anarchist. In the lower right hand corner a Russian woman anarchist who wrote several pamphlets.

Court.—The significance of this frame, red and black stripes running transversely across the corner is that it means blood and death.

District Attorney Zabel charged the defendants with having gone to the corner meeting on Sunday, September 9, armed with revolvers, and having formed a conspiracy so to do, with having committed an "assault with intent to murder" upon certain police officers. Zabel contended that the defendants were not only armed but were the ones who started the shooting.

Here is some testimony on those points by witnesses for the prosecution.

Maud Richter, witness for prosecution, cross-examined by defendant's lawyer.

"I did not see anybody have any guns besides the detectives, but after the shooting I saw the two guns in the hands of the detectives and I noticed the detectives pick up another gun after the shooting."

Cornelius Pajot, witness for prosecution.

"I saw six guns but I didn't see any of these defendants have a gun or do any act towards an officer there that day, nor raise their hand toward an officer."

Domenic Gernanotta, witness for prosecution.

"I didn't see any of these eleven defendants have a gun there."

At a preliminary hearing, District Attorney Zabel cross-examined the defendants as follows and

*Keep in mind that the charge was conspiracy to "assault with intent to murder."

introduced the statements thus obtained in evidence against the defendants at the trial.

Examination of L. Amedeo, by Zabel, at preliminary hearing:

Q.—How long do you belong to the anarchist club?

A.—I don't belong to the club, but I went there several times.

Q.—How long have you been an anarchist?

A.—I am not an anarchist.

Q.—You had a gun last Sunday when you shot the officers?

A.—No.

Q.—Wasn't a gun taken from you? Didn't you hand a gun to one of the other anarchists?

A.—I had no revolver.

Q.—And they agreed to meet so as to break up this meeting?

A.—I don't know anything about it.

Examination of A. Pantaleoni, by Zabel.

Q.—How many years have you been an anarchist?

A.—I never was.

Q.—You belong to the anarchist club?

A.—No.

Examination of P. Nardini, by Zabel.

Q.—How many years are you an anarchist?

A.—I never was an anarchist.

Q.—Belong to the club, don't you?

A.—I never belonged to the club, but sometimes I went there when there was a special speaker or music.

Examination of A. Fratessi, by Zabel.

Q.—How many years are you an anarchist?

A.—I wasn't an anarchist.

Q.—You belong to the club?

A.—No.

Examination of P. Bianchi, by Zabel.

Q.—What is the name of the anarchist club you belong to?

A.—Italian education club.

Q.—You believe in having no government, you want the government overthrown?

A.—I believe in that.

Q.—You want to kill off the officers?

A.—I don't kill nobody.

Q.—(Asked suddenly, without introduction or connection with what had gone before.)

What did you do with your gun? You had it Sunday.

A.—Nothing doing.

Q.—You knew the others had a gun?

A.—I didn't know nobody had a gun.

Q.—Who first said you would go over there and break up that meeting?

A.—Nobody; I wasn't with the bunch.

Examination of V. Fratessi, by Zabel.

Q.—What time did you get to the club room when the rest of the anarchists were there Sunday afternoon?

A.—I didn't go to the meeting.

(District Attorney assumed that defendant was at club room and that they were all anarchists. Defendant not given chance to explain.)

Q.—What did you do with your gun?

A.—I had no revolver.

Q.—Didn't you march ahead and tell the men to go and break up the meeting? What did you do with the gun that Angelo gave you on the corner?

A.—Nobody gave me a revolver, because I ran away.

(Two questions asked at once with defendant naturally expected to answer only last one, leaving it for argument to urge that he did not answer the first one and that therefore he did march at the head of the procession and tell the men to break up the meeting.)

One of the witnesses for the defense was John LaDucca, secretary of the Italian branch of the Socialist party of Milwaukee, who lectured at the "Circolo di Studi Sociali" on the Sunday of the shooting.

To show that the club had lectures on the philosophy of a party that was not in accord with anarchist ideas, the lawyer for the defense, Mr. Rubin, questioned LaDucca as follows:

Q.—I will ask you whether or not it is a part of the general scheme of the Socialist party to have any President or presiding officer?

(Question objected to by Zabel and objection sustained.)

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*The "hall" was a room in the rear of a saloon at 300 Bishop Ave., Milwaukee, used as the meeting place of the "Circolo di Studi Sociali," a club for the study of social sciences, to which several of the defendants belonged, while the rest occasionally went there to meet their friends or to participate in musical entertainments held there. The club was raided soon after the shooting and literature of a scientific, philosophic, socialistic and anarchistic nature found there was taken away by the police.