

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

FROM the overthrow of the Tsar up to the second battle of the Marne, the German Empire was the most powerful and dangerous enemy of European democracy. A proud military caste, whose fame of victory gave it unlimited authority and unbounded power over the nation, ruled the Empire. Under the prestige of their weapons the Junkers and the great capitalists dictated the course the Government should pursue. They employed the collapse of Russia to adventure in to the most perilous undertakings. They crushed the proletarian revolution in Finland and the Ukraine. They endeavored to attach Esthonia, Livonia, Courland, Lithuania, and Poland to Germany for all time to come. They dreamed of a powerful Empire, subjecting to its sway two score of nations, extending from the White Sea to the Black Sea and from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf. All the border peoples were to be united to Germany. Austria, two thirds of whose population are Slavs subordinated to German domination, was to be allied with Germany in a central Europe community. Turkey was to be organized by German officers and officials with the aid of German capitalists and engineers. Had it been possible to realize this plan, the path to democracy would have been blocked throughout this gigantic empire of subject nations. While German imperialism dreamed of this empire in the East, it also proposed a kingdom of Flanders in the West under German protection, and the annexation of the ore beds of French Lorraine. That was the German imperialism which we German Social Democrats in Austria combated. We fought these ideas be-

cause such plans for world conquest prolonged the war. We fought them because they involved Germany in a contest with a population numerically superior, and possessing industrial resources and raw materials enormously more abundant than our own, and, moreover, with an all-powerful alliance of the free nations of the earth. Such a contest involved a fearful peril for ourselves. We opposed this imperialism because its victory would have destroyed the freedom of all nations, and would have put an insurmountable obstacle in the way of the democratic progress of the greater part of Europe. We fought this imperialism because if it had been successful its plans of domination would have divided the world for decades into two enemy camps, would have brought about a new era of competition in armaments, and would inevitably have resulted in a revolt and a war of vengeance by the subject nations against Germany.

But since the German army was checked for a second time upon the Marne in its advance against Paris, the fortunes of war have changed in the West, and the dangers we combated no longer exist. German imperialism is no longer in a position to threaten the freedom of other nations. Victorious imperialism, not defeated imperialism, is dangerous. Instead of German imperialism it is now Entente imperialism that imperils the democratic constitution of future Europe.

While Germany's international position has changed the centre of authority at home has likewise shifted. Together with German imperialism threatening the freedom of other peoples, the caste system of govern-

ment, that subjected the German people itself to the domination of generals, Junkers, and capitalists, has collapsed. The transformation that recently occurred in Germany should not be undervalued. But it is only a concession to necessity. The old powers are not yet disarmed. In spite of the introduction of parliamentary government in the Empire and of equal suffrage in Prussia the country is still far from true democracy. A possibility of its relapsing into its old course is not yet excluded. But, although the victory of democracy remains to be won, the concessions made to that principle, to which the ruling castes have been forced to accommodate themselves, are certain indications of its approaching triumph.

When the German people realize fully what misfortunes the ruling classes have brought upon their country they will soon settle with these gentlemen. When the soldiers have returned from trenches, where they have performed unexampled deeds for four years and where they have endured unprecedented suffering, only to find a diminished Fatherland, burdened with unendurable economic conditions, robbed of the foundations of its world commerce, they will demand a reckoning with the men who have brought this catastrophe upon the German nation. Never again will they entrust the destiny of their country to generals, Junkers, and capitalists. The German nation will take its fate in its own hands. Before the war broke out a third of the German people already acknowledged allegiance to the red flag. Now under such a frightful, such a crushing experience, under the pressure of a fearful transformation that has reduced great sections of the people to the proletariat, a majority will flock to the camp of the Social Democrats. No one can foresee how

democracy will win its victory in Germany — whether it is to be in the storm and stress of a great revolution, or, as occurred in England, through a peaceful, smooth succession of legislative reforms. But though the method may be uncertain the triumph is assured. The Germany of to-morrow will be a democratic Germany.

The victory of German democracy will be the victory of German Socialism. No other country in the world is as ready for Socialism as Germany. In Russia, where a young proletariat has made a valiant but undisciplined attempt to create a Socialist State, the working classes form only one tenth of the population. In Germany the wage-earning proletariat forms two thirds of the people. In England, where the corresponding class is relatively even more numerous than in Germany, governmental organization of industry is making but slow and toilsome progress against the principle of free competition. In Germany, on the other hand, the Government intervened extensively and authoritatively in economic matters long before the war. The latter event forced Germany to organize its manufacturing and trade on a strictly governmental basis, and the vast machinery for socializing production and exchange, which served military purposes during the war and was controlled by military authorities, will be converted into an instrument of Socialism as soon as the control of the Government passes from the hands of the army to the hands of the proletariat. The compulsory syndicates that have been organized as war companies and controlled by the imperial bureaucracy are to-day capitalistic organizations serving military objects. But when the proletariat seizes power, when the Government places unions of workmen in the positions of the capitalists who now manage the war

companies, and places a democratic civil service recruited from the working people in place of the Junker bureaucrats who now regulate the companies, we shall have converted the capitalistic military war organization into the parent-cell of a Socialist organization of industry. Consequently, the economic and formal prerequisites of Socialism exist in Germany at present, to a greater extent than in any other country. In contrast with other nations, Socialism in Germany is merely a question of authority. We are confident of the ability of the German proletariat to seize this authority. The German proletarians returning from the trenches will not pay homage to Krupp and Hohenlohe, to Thyssen and Stinnes, to Rathenau and Ballin. The decisive battle between capital and labor will be fought on German soil, and will be fought in the near future.

Thus the Germany of to-morrow will be an entirely different country than the Germany of yesterday. It is important for us to realize this in order that the ideas of yesterday may not confuse our decision for to-morrow. For it is very possible that we Austrian-Germans will soon be forced to decide our future relations with that country. Old Austria is dead. We German Social Democrats of Austria want to build a new country which will be a federation of free nations. But if the other nationalities of Austria are unwilling to coöperate with us, or if they consent to do so only under conditions which do not guarantee us economic interests and our national right of self-

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determination, in that case German-Austrians must decide whether it will not be better to join what is now the German Empire as an autonomous federal State. Such a decision would not be easy; for our union with Germany would sunder our old commercial relations and plunge us headlong into new and unfamiliar conditions; it would subordinate us to a strange political and legal system; and only after a period of painful labor and trial could our national industry accommodate itself to the new situation. On the other hand, our union with what is the present German Empire would bring us many compensating advantages. In Austria where the conflicting interests of different nationalities play so great a part, and where these interests constantly overlap, democracy will always be limited by some power superior to the individual nations. Germany, on the other hand, will be a country of a single united people in which popular government can be unconditionally realized. In Austria the class struggle will inevitably be hampered and complicated by national conflicts, which will divert the people from social and political tasks, and will thus prevent the class battle of the proletariat from taking its normal course. In Austria we will remain part of an imperial union in which a majority of the people are peasants and in which industrial evolution has not yet attained the point of transition to Socialism; a union with Germany will make us members of a national community in which the prerequisite conditions for Socialism already exist.

THE MOST MISERABLE OF MEN

BY DESMOND MACCARTHY

'Of all men,' said the youth who was sitting in the far corner of the railway carriage, gazing into the setting sun, 'of all men I am the most miserable.'

We were alone in the compartment, and he was talking to himself. I rustled my paper, but he took no notice and his lips continued to move inaudibly. His worried young face looked intelligent and amiable. I liked him.

'I hope you won't think me intrusive,' I said (at the sound of my voice he came to himself), 'but, if you feel inclined, will you tell me what prompted that tragic exclamation?'

'What! What did I say?'

'You said you were the most miserable of men. It is not likely that I can help, but it might be a relief to talk about what is on your mind to someone you will never see again.'

After a pause he said shyly, 'I am ashamed.'

'Then you will get relief from telling me,' I replied. 'Confession makes us feel we are after all superior to ourselves. There is nothing like it for reviving self-respect.'

'I am too ashamed,' he repeated, smiling a little.

I leaned across and touched his knee. 'You will forgive me, then?' We were silent for some minutes and ceased to look at each other.

The rhythmic trantle-trantle of the unhurrying train was soothing to us both. Outside in the landscape the sun had gone down, and my tortured companion having now no dazzling disc to gaze into, fell to prodding the seat opposite with his stick. He was still con-

sidering himself, I surmised, in a painfully searching though, perhaps, no longer in a tragic light. I liked him very much.

'You see — The fact is —' (I turned to him at once). 'Oh! I can't,' he exclaimed desperately, bringing his heel down on the floor of the carriage with a bang.

'How long ago did it happen?'

He seemed relieved at my question. 'Three years about.'

'Three years! And you are still the most miserable of men?'

'Oh, no! That's only what I felt like just now. I don't often think of it; but when I do — it's absurd — I always say that to myself. It has become a habit. I don't always say it aloud though,' he added smiling.

'I am very glad you did,' I answered, 'for now you can get it off your mind, whatever it is, and it will never come back again — at any rate, so excruciatingly.'

He laughed, this time quite naturally. 'The truth is, now that I evidently mean to tell you, what embarrasses me most is that it is such a *little* thing.'

'There!' I exclaimed. 'There you are! You're half cured already. Go on. Go on.'

'Well, will you believe something first? Really believe it? I'm *not* a snob. I mean I am not, and never was such a snob as many other people. I don't boast about my fine acquaintances. I'm not such a fool — now, at any rate. And I swear I never really did, or very seldom ever; and even then only in a