

# The Socialism of the Central Powers

Their Socialists cowed and aims prevented -- Defeat necessary to bring democratic freedom

By W. W. SWANSON.

The English publicist, Mr. Brailsford, is doubly right in affirming that "absolute justice contains such moral dynamite that its full application would wreck any present-day society." Those who most enthusiastically accept the principle underlying the idea of a League of Nations fail to comprehend the full significance of Mr. Brailsford's contention. It is always necessary to prepare the way for truth—and especially for the application of political and economic truth. The Bolsheviks, the Italian, French and English defeatists, have been worse than futile in their hope to reform the world overnight. The saying of Signor Treves, the Italian Deputy, that "the soldiers must not spend another winter in the trenches," did much, along with espionage, to provoke disaffection in the Genoese Electrical Works, and traitorous commerce with the enemy to bring about the debacle at Caporetto. Few will mourn that Malvy has gone to spend five years of exile in Spain; that Bolo Pasha paid the penalty of treachery with his life; or that the Sinn Feiners who defiled Dublin with their Easter madness in 1916, met a deserved fate. We say nothing here of the ideals that some of these men wished to further; it is with their methods only that we must quarrel. When liberty and democracy are in a death grapple with tyranny, it is both futile and foolish to speak of peace, where there can be no peace.

All this by way of introduction to the ideals and programme of Austro-German Socialism. While the leaders of the proletariat of Western Europe, and even within Russia itself, gave themselves over before the war to the unifying of the workers of the world, German and Austrian Socialists never lost sight of purely national objects and national aggrandizement. Jaures was the victim of French fanaticism; but the leaders of German democracy stood in no fear of harm by the people of the government at the outbreak of war. True, Leibknecht and Dittman, recently released, were thrown into prison. These brave men did not kill their conscience nor withhold their criticism of tyranny, nor lend their support to the military madness of the Kaiser; but they found few, if any, disciples faithful to them in the Fatherland. Only defeat has forced upon the prison gates, and it remains to be seen whether in defeat the German Socialists can find that courage which they lacked when victory seemed assured.

The German Social Democrats lent the full weight of their influence to the support of the war; and in Austria-Hungary their confreres, the Christian Socialists, followed their lead and example. This is significant in view of the fact that the Austrian Socialists had always been firm defenders of Franz Joseph and his dynasty, opposing their will to that of the National Association, composed of Chauvinists and Pan-Germans, who wished to submerge the Dual Monarchy in the German Empire. The Vienna "Arbeiterzeitung," the organ of the Socialists, stated at the outbreak of hostilities, "that the proletariat must unite to destroy the menace of the Slav"—this is an Empire that contained 30,000,000 Slavs! The "Austrian idea"—the preservation of the Dual Monarchy through federalization of the component States—supported strongly by the nobility on the one hand, and the Socialists on the other, lost ground sharply, and almost at once, with the beginning of war. As defeat after defeat was inflicted upon Austrian arms by Russia and Roumania, and as Germany again and again saved the situation, Austria was compelled to lean more heavily upon her Ally. This gave the Pan-Germans their chance. The leaders of the Christian Socialists abandoned their support of the Austrian dynasty, as such, and consented to the unification, not only of Western Austria, but of the whole Empire, with Germany. At Munich, in 1916, Dr. Patten declared at the great economic conference, held to further the "Mitteleuropa" scheme, "that just as the military and diplomatic forces of the two Empires must be unified in days of peace, to prepare for war, so the financial, industrial and fiscal interests of Germany and Austria must be centralized in days of peace to prepare for united action in time of war." This certainly assures that, without dismemberment and

freedom for the Czechs, the Jugo-Slavs, and the Croats and other subject nationalities, Austria allied to Germany, and brought under Hohenzollern domination, will be a permanent menace to the peace of the world.

It is impossible to predict what disillusionment and peace without victory, but with heavy penalties, will bring to the German Social Democrats. It is well to bear in mind that there has never been any hard or stern struggle for democratic freedom in the history of Prussia or of the German Empire. True, in 1848, there was an outburst of liberalism in Prussia in response to, and occasioned by, the outburst of democratic forces elsewhere in Europe. The liberals, among them Karl Schurz and many other able men, were forced to flee to America, where they played a great role in the fight for freedom in 1861. Since that day, however, democracy has made little or no progress in the several German States, or in the Empire as a whole. True, some brave German voices have been heard in Germany and in neutral countries since the outbreak of hostilities, expressing abhorrence of Prussianism and all its works—among these, that of Leibknecht, Dr. Muelhon, the author of "J. Accuse," and sundry others. But the millions composing the proletariat have gone their accustomed way. How long will it last?

It is interesting to observe the strength of the anti-monarchical movement in Germany in the days preceding the war. It manifested itself in the Socialists withdrawing themselves from the Reichstag when cheers were given for the Emperor; in their refusal to support the annual budget; in their non-appearance at State functions. These were gestures, however, and nothing more. What is more significant is that the Socialists played a big part on the Main Committees of Parliament; and that they gave brilliant and prominent leaders to municipal life. They were, indeed, members of His Majesty's "Loyal Opposition." They appeared on school commissions, formulated industrial and social legislation, and made their influence felt in a conservative and constructive way everywhere. On parade they were iconoclasts; in action, they were merely the liberals of the Fatherland.

What they have stood for, and what they have demanded, appears moderate enough to the democracies of Canada and the United States. They have advocated ministerial responsibility to Parliament; suffrage reforms in Prussia; redistribution of the electoral districts for the Reichstag where the one man, one vote, policy might be made real; the disestablishment of the Lutheran Church; national free schools; the displacement of the Army by the militia system; the introduction and extension of direct taxation; and a larger control of national industries by labour. Aside from this debatable last point the average Canadian or American would find nothing verging upon the revolutionary either in the ideas or the objects of the German Socialists.

The Social Democrats have on more than one occasion allied themselves with the Liberals and Clericals to attain their ends. These parties have usually found themselves opposed to the Conservatives, made up of the Junkers and the agrarian interests. In Germany, however, the various political groups form alliances in a way that rather bewilders the student of politics in Canada or the United States. In 1909, for example, the Clericals and Conservatives joined forces to defeat the Inheritance Tax Bill; while the Conservatives, for purely selfish reasons alone, defeated the measure designed to build a great midland canal, as it appeared it might injure the landed interests. As everyone knows the great agrarian group, composed of Conservatives backed by the Junkers, have in the past set their faces like flint against the extension of the franchise to the people as a whole in Prussia.

Suffrage reform in Prussia will probably be an accomplished fact before the close of hostilities. The Emperor, Von Hertling, Von Kuehlmann, and many other powerful personages have so decreed. The Junkers find it hard to give way; but they must give way. Ministerial responsibility in the Reichstag, we are told, is also an accomplished fact; but

the reality of this reform remains to be seen. Moreover, while Kuno Francke and other German apologists have dilated upon the fact that, in the Empire, there has been universal suffrage in the past, they have not been able to gloss over the truth that universal suffrage has been a sham and a fraud—that by manipulation of the electoral districts there could not be, and never has been, proportional representation in parliament. Prince Maximilian has recently informed the world that henceforth there will be direct, secret and universal suffrage in the Fatherland. If this becomes an actuality, it necessarily means, with ministerial responsibility, that at last the semblance of democracy has appeared in Germany. How real that democracy will be depends upon the breaking of the power of the agrarians, the great industrial leaders, and, above all, of the Hohenzollern dynasty.

It was Von Kuehlmann who said: "Woe to the statesman who fails to read the signs of the times!" This was a direct reference to recent events in Russia. It must not be thought, however, that the liberalizing of the political life of Germany will provoke a fundamental revolution among the people. It is dangerous to predict what will occur during these eventful days, when anything may happen in the twinkling of an eye. Nevertheless, giving the enemy his due, it must be admitted that no other country on the Continent shows a higher level of intelligence, nor affords so great an example of the realization of the value of discipline. It is probable that Germany will go its way, freed from dynastic control of its political and economic life, devoted to the broadening and deepening of its social and cultural life. In this connection one should recall Herr Dernburg's pregnant remarks, made at the conference of the Progressive People's Party at Breslau, some time since, that personal rights and personal freedom must be guaranteed by the State in the future, since the State had demanded the right to control the lives and destinies of the people, in war, for its own protection. Without defeat, nevertheless, it would have been a sheer impossibility to reform the political affairs of Germany in any vital way. For it must be remembered that those who control were convinced that the non-party form of government, with direct ministerial responsibility to the Emperor, had assured and secured German greatness.

Few of us realize what a tremendous task for allied diplomacy, and the armies of democracy and freedom, it has been to break down German confidence in the Army and the Hohenzollern dynasty. The leaders in almost every sphere of thought in the Fatherland have paid allegiance to the Army and the Emperor; insisting that the former has taught the nation discipline, courage, tenacity and resolution, while the Emperor has directed and encouraged every means and method that would enlarge and strengthen the social and political life of the nation. It would be foolish to deny the great things that the German nation has accomplished—the British, such poor exploiters of their own virtues and achievements, have been the first to hail German deeds in history and commerce, and German progress in science and the arts. These achievements, however, need not, and must not, for the future, rest upon military might. Force, force without stint or limit, as President Wilson has affirmed, must be exerted to destroy once and forever the madness of German militarism, which all but succeeded in wrecking civilization.

## LATE MR. SMYTH.

Mr. R. N. Smyth, who died suddenly last week, was one of the best known business men in the city. He was Vice-President of Henderson & Smyth, Manufacturers' Agents, President of S. B. Foote Company, a Director of Goodwins, Ltd., and a Director of the Canadian Light and Power Co. For some years Mr. Smyth published the Shareholder, a financial weekly, which is now incorporated in the Journal of Commerce. The late Mr. Smyth was born in Belfast 62 years ago. He was a warm hearted, likeable Irishman, with a host of friends in this city.

A rookie was reading an article about the Kaiser which compared him with Nero. "Who was Nero, Bill?" he asked of a fellow-rookie. "Wasn't he a man that was always cold?"

"Naw," was the reply, "that was Zero, another guy altogether."—Transcript.