

Revolutions: Political and Social

BY J. HARRINGTON

Article Eleven.

THE situation in Vienna during the last days of October 1848, cannot be better summed up than in the words of Marx: "Inside, confusion, class division, disorganization; a national guard part of which were resolved not to fight at all, part irresolute, and only the smallest part ready to act; a proletarian mass powerful in numbers but without leaders, without any political education, subject to panic, as well as to fits of fury, almost without cause, a prey to every false rumor spread about, quite ready to fight, but unarmed, at least at the beginning, and incompletely armed and barely organized when at last they are led to battle; a helpless Diet, discussing theoretical quibbles while the roof over their head was almost burning; a leading committee without impulse or energy."

While from every point of the compass marched reinforcements to the troops already surrounding the doomed revolutionaries. Yet, so far as legality goes, as Fyffe points out in his "History of Modern Europe," "The Viennese Assembly, treating itself as a legitimate and constitutional power threatened by a group of soldiers who had usurped the monarch's authority, hesitated to compromise its legal character by calling in the Hungarian Army." This army, however illegal its support might have been, was the only power which could have maintained the Assembly's legal character. And that perhaps only temporarily, for "Nicky thy elephantine hoof" (as a writer in Blackstones magazine pleasantly ruminated on the invasion of revolutionary Europe by Russia), was already anxiously awaiting "legal" sanction to stamp out the rebel movement.

When Auersperg left the city there arose a movement to overthrow the Assembly and install a government more in tune with the new development. Robert Blum opposed this, and his influence prevailed, so much was any semblance of illegality feared. No such scruples troubled the attacking army, now under the "legal" control of Prince Schwarzenberg, the new prime minister, one of the most unprincipled scoundrels that ever lived, a man whose private life was so foul that the Neapolitan Court was the only one which would tolerate him as ambassador, but a man singular in this, that he carried the same reckless disregard of conventions, which caused his expulsion from several European courts, with all that the removal of an Ambassador carried with it, into all his activities. Few men have exercised power who were less hampered by the restraining-influence of what we call humane feelings, and possessed of greater courage. With Prince Windischgratz, Marshal Radetzky and the Ban Jellachich as his generals, he had a guarantee of implicit obedience. The attack on Vienna then opened, unhampered by legal qualms or tender feelings toward property, human life or ultimate consequences.

The suburbs were soon entered. The defenders, under Messenhauser, whom Marx characterises as "more of a novel writer than even a subaltern officer," were hopelessly confused; he believed the defence was hopeless and advised surrender. That this man was the only military produce of six months of semi-warfare is significant of the nature of the struggle we are reviewing, the beating of blind forces upon the barriers of development. Second in command was Joseph Bem, a Polish soldier of fortune, who had arrived with the Frankfort delegation. One of those men, which the times pro-

duced in fair numbers, from Buonarrotti to Dombrowski, dauntless, tireless, uncompromising skilled and resourceful soldiers, bred in the camp, like Othello, since first their arms had seven years pith till now some few Moons wasted. Anarchist and republican, their life and energy ever at the service of revolution. Marx says he was the only man who could save Vienna if any man could. Postgate pronounces him theatrical, for very little reason, certainly less than could be leveled at most generals; a failing, too, common as the breath of our nostrils among humans.

Being a foreigner, and a Slav at that, the requirements of the situation which he well knew—unquestioned obedience, in fact, a dictatorship—could scarcely be enforced by him. Looked upon as an interloper alike by the Assembly and Windischgratz, who indeed exclaimed—By what right does this Pole interfere in the affairs of Austria?—his life was in almost equal danger whether victory or defeat awaited his friends. Bem thrust himself to the front, and while his commander counsels surrender, he drove the motley army to its task with threats and abuse; and believing that with an inexperienced and divided force such as he commanded it was better to attack than defend, he organized a sortie, but the inexperience was just as fatal in this. Different groups of the Viennese troops met in the darkness and mistaking each other for the enemy started a fight of their own. In vain Bem tried to rally them; in the confusion, his horse shot beneath him, abuse, threats, and blows, were of no avail; the Viennese fled to their city, and Bem wisely retired to second place.

A truce was arranged on the 30th, and had hardly been accepted when from the tower of St. Stephen's Church, observers among whom was Messenhauser, saw beyond the investing lines the smoke of a battle. While the Magyar generals were awaiting the mantle of legality to cover their actions, Kussuth had prevailed on them to march without its protecting folds. This however could not be done without much misgivings, and an order to advance was followed by an order to retreat, until the army had lost that confidence requisite to determined action. They now advanced with the almost certainty of an order to retreat. When the news reached the beleaguered people that the Hungarian Army was on its way to their assistance, preparations which should have been made at the outset were now considered, but such was the intense respect for property, they were never carried out. One absolutely necessary military measure, the destruction of the railway, was contemplated and rejected; leaving a swift means to launch a large force at the advancing Magyars.

The Viennese did, however, disregard the truce just entered into, and fell with fury upon the Slav army in the suburbs. Thus after hesitating to break the legal sanctions they committed the most abominable of military offences, and added a spur to the virtuous slaughter perpetrated by an outraged soldiery. God in heaven but the moral conduct of man is a mystery not less confounding than some communists' valor; the psychologists can find in the inhibitions of sex some causes for the Viennese and Hungarian legal treading as well as for the elephantine tread of the Austrian war lords. Or does their mystery mongering go that far?

But we in our fatuous perversity can only marvel at the small matters, which, at these decisive points of history, have determined the fate of thousands of our fellow slaves; at the unexampled courage with which our class has squandered life and energy in struggles of no consequence to them; forgiving unto seventy times seven the treachery of all other classes, while harboring the meanest suspicions and nursing the bitterest animosity toward

their own; at the deadly apathy in the day of defeat, permitting reaction to enforce them to enchain each other. All right, call in the quacks, but excuse our departure; we never could abide noise, and the sex nostrums of the newly wise are to us, as efficacious as the tom toms of the witch doctors.

The Hungarian army, demoralized by the vacillating policy of its generals; was hopelessly routed by Windischgratz, and Vienna was now left to withstand the assault of an army flushed by victory over its former conquerors.

The Slavs fell upon Vienna with such fury that before dark of the 31st all was over. And even while the infuriated Slavs were butchering in almost insane frenzy the defenders in the suburbs, in the town itself riots and strife over small matters were frequent. The energy of the investing army, possessed of a happier libido, was devoted to the slaughter of its enemies.

Bem and some of the word-spinners from Frankfort escaped. Blum and Froebel were captured. The latter was released because of some expressions he had voiced regarding the unity of the Austrian Empire. Blum was shot. Bem was still to appear in arms against the Austrian, in the struggle for Hungarian "liberty," a struggle which lies outside our story. But which proved the soundness of the Slav poet's metaphor, regarding the Slav ocean and the Magyar Island. Nicky with his elephantine hoof put an end to the victories which everywhere attended the Hungarian armies in the war which followed the fall of Vienna. And for Hungary there remained not a semblance of that independence which had long been hers in fact, if not in name.

The Dual Empire returned to the status of the Metternichean period, and under Schwarzenberg, with his pitiless and unscrupulous policy, was restored to the autocratic status existing prior to the tidal wave of revolution. One change, a vital one, was all that remained to mark those inspiring months, the Feudal system of land tenure was gone forever.

The remaining months we will discuss in our next, taking up the last remnants of the revolution, and the effect of the second disaster on Germany; leaving Vienna, as we would a chamber of horrors, to the imagination of our readers.

HERE AND NOW.

SOME letters of sympathy have come this way since last issue, joining with us in mourning the memory of one time presentable cash totals. We are encouraged and exhorted to hold out. If we hold out, it is said, the crisis will pass and the halcyon days will come again. Fine. It is easy to see our readers are readers also of the news from Germany. The German chancellor has quite a time in the German "Here and Now" department—as you might say—especially when the "money makers" go so far as to quit work. Now it is just as hard to cash in on kind words as to stabilize a trillion or two of marks. And so we come to writing "Notes," Here and Now. Our printer also writes "Notes," and so we rely on the Clarion reader to help us frame our reply. The reply, of course, is only acceptable in terms of cash. The simple problem is to increase the total:—

Following \$1 each: C. Twist, R. Thomas, A. J. Bell, W. Braes, J. W. Dargie, A. Clark, F. Tidswell, A. Hollingshead, J. Knight, L. B. LaMarche, R. Emery, J. Staples, G. Broadhurst, A. Toppano, R. Wotherspoon.

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