
Bravo, German Comrades!

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Bravo, German Comrades! The foremost political party of the world is true to itself, true to us, true to the human race. The wonderful, the disciplined, the ordered, the self-contained Social Democracy, that seemed to have marched bag, baggage, and all into the camp of the enemies of the masses, has shown itself true, has shown that the hopes that the masses placed in it were not misplaced.

Since August 4, 1914, that dreadful day when Hugo Haase read in the Reichstag the words, "with these considerations in mind, we give our consent to the credits requested," the Social Democracy of the empire has been under a terrible cloud. From a timid defense, up to a violent, a vigorous, a savage excoriation, the action of the 112 members of the Socialist Party in the German Parliament has been the subject of debate, the most angry, the most heated, that international Socialism has ever experienced.

A year ago today, we were complacently discussing the assassination of the Archduke of Austria; it never occurred to the world to think that the killing of a man and a woman of no particular international importance would cause more of a flurry than, for instance, the assassination of the Empress of Austria in 1898 by an Italian. But events moved with a terrible, with a fated swiftness. The war clouds threatened. The Socialists unlimbered their heavy artillery of protest, as they had a dozen times before. No one dared insinuate that the Socialists were animated by anything less

than a terrible earnestness in their great demonstrations. Every word that was said, every resolution that was passed, was meant, not as rhetoric, but as sober truth. And none were more valiant, none more eager, none more wonderfully united, than our German comrades.

The war came despite the heroic efforts of our comrades.

When we finally learned that the German comrades had voted for the war credits, that they had accepted the conditions of "civil peace" for the duration of the war, that members of the Socialist delegation in Parliament had actually volunteered, our astonishment knew no bounds.

The declarations of August 4 [1914] and December 2 [1914] asserted that as soon as the German arms had secured the integrity of German soil, the German comrades would work for peace. It was a promise. And it was not generally believed.

August last is so long ago that it seems like another age that we were in possession of the belief that Germany was the home of the greatest Socialist movement in the world. It seems like another age, that we were proudly boasting of these German comrades. We had steeled ourselves to what was to us the inevitable, that German Socialism was merely a giant Democratic party, largely impregnated with Socialism. We had forgotten, and almost forgiven. We had become accustomed to the ultra-patriotic speeches of men like Heine and Hanisch, and believed that the Socialism that

was left resided in Liebknecht, in Bernstein, and the two noble women, Klara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg.

Again, we were to have our expectations belied by the facts. The Socialists promised to support the war until Germany was clear of the Cossacks, and the danger of the Cossacks. Then, they were to fight to end the war.

They have kept their promise to the letter.

We may quarrel with them for their action. Not a single step is ever taken by the Socialist movement without the widest difference of opinion. When we nominate candidates, when we assist a strike, when we enter legislatures, whatever we do is discussed by all shades of opinion. The only thing that we require is that whatever action is taken should be for the best interests of the working class in the minds of those who do it; and in good faith. Quarrel we may from now until the day after the inauguration of the Cooperative Commonwealth over the goodness or the badness of the action of the German comrades in supporting the war for the reason they gave us. But the important thing is that they gave us their

word that they meant it for the interests of the proletariat, and that they would work for peace as soon as the Russian danger cleared.

In a notable exchange of letters between Philip Scheidemann and Emile Vandervelde, the ties of the International are reaffirmed, and the way paved for the reorganization of that great body. They gave their word, and they meant what they said.

That they have the courage of their convictions is an old story. That they have gone to jail a thousand times for us, for our great movement, is history. That they were willing to risk their lives any time for the cause is well enough known. That they gave their lives in many clashes with the police is recorded in shining letters. That they had the physical courage of their convictions is attested on a thousand battlefields, whether we believe that they were right or not. They were heroes.

Now comes the time that they spoke of. Quietly, without ostentation, their proclamation is heralded to a gasping world. And for the first time since last August, the Socialist world may cheer wildly.

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