

EDITORIAL

## THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HIS year's German Social Democratic Congress now in session at Jena, may, or may not, mark an epoch in the party's history as some anticipate. That, however, upon which there can be but little doubt is that the batch of reformatory tactics, collectively known as "Revisionism," is not and will not be the pivot upon which the action of the Congress will actually turn, however loud the rattle of the issues raised about these tactics may be.

The pivot upon which the deliberations of the Congress will turn is, de facto, Unionism.

The fact transpires from the heated controversy in the party's papers between the opposing factions on the subject of the "political mass strike," that is, the General Strike for the securing of political rights—a heated controversy that may be said to have served for months as the overture to the Congress, and which the death of Bebel only temporarily hushed up.

The situation will be best grasped by weighing the views of the leading spirits on the subject. These actually reduce themselves to two—Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky.

In her advocacy of the political mass strike, Rosa Luxemburg proceeds from the premises that "we now live in times when there are no longer any advantages to be gained for the proletariat upon the field of parliamentarism," meaning, of course, by parliamentarism what is called in European parliamentary parlance the "bloc," that is, the log-rolling by combinations of otherwise opposed delegations to parliaments.

In support of this view Rosa Luxemburg points derisively to Kautsky's recent prophecy of "a new Liberalism" being about to arise in Germany, and the utter

breakdown of the prophecy; she insists upon the necessity of a “sharply outlined and forward-looking polity” on the part of the Unions, without which polity “the organization would silently drop into a “dry-rot”; she illustrates her meaning by referring to the total absence of any “republican demonstration” on the occasion of the recent visit of the Czar in Berlin, and indignantly and sarcastically she asks: “Is it for that that we have 4 millions of Social Democratic votes—to creep into a mouse-hole when the Bloody Czar arrives?”

Kautsky, on the other hand, objects to the political mass strike with the argument: “It is the conditions of the class struggle that ever take care to prevent indifference in the masses from becoming a permanent phenomenon, and that ever generates fresh impulses to action. To direct such impulses, not to awaken the same, is the mission of the party. . . . Besides the prospects of the struggle, the magnitude of the prize that is involved is, above all things, that which stimulates the energy and the impulse for action among the proletariat in its struggles”; and Kautsky endeavors to illustrate his point with allusions to the recent coal miners’ strike in Germany, when the unorganized, and also kindred Unions, “left the strikes in the lurch and even opposed them.”

The outlines of the conflicting views are clearly marked—at least they are quite clearly inferrable.

That the economically organized proletariat of Germany are not ripe for the determined and bold move of a political strike both sides are evidently agreed upon. That which the two sides differ over is really whether the game of a political mass strike is worth the candle, or not; and that, in turn, involves the advisability, or uselessness, of class-conscious agitation, education and organization in behalf of Unionism.

The position taken by Rosa Luxemburg is that the game is worth the candle, hence, that aggressiveness, which means class-consciousness in Unionism, should be promoted—a posture that transpires from her horror of a Unionism afflicted with the dry-rot.

The position taken by Kautsky resolves itself into the theory that the game is not worth the candle—a posture that transpires from his citing a strike, which failed to arouse the masses, as an illustration of the principle that “the magnitude

of the prize,” involved in a struggle, is a determining factor in inspiring energy and impelling action—another way of saying that Unionism is not capable of conceiving prizes worth fighting for.

However erroneous the posture of Kautsky, there is for it the justification of “conservatism”; however correct the posture of Rosa Luxemburg, there is against it the danger that ever accompanies “aggression.” Whether or not the Jena Congress will record the triumph of either, this much is certain that the Jena Congress will markedly record the fact that in the capitalistically waxing German Empire the Union Question is advancing to the point that Marx stated it would take, and thus impart full orbenedness to the Socialist Movement of the land.

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