

PAN-GERMAN SOCIALISM

(NEO-MARXISM)

BY

WM. STEPHEN SANDERS

(Reprinted from "The New Age")

W. H. SMITH & SON, LONDON

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SOCIALISM

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Pan-German Socialism

(Neo-Marxism).

"In the future the world will find order through warlike selection. . . . That Power which proves itself to be the strongest organisation is also summoned by history to perform the greatest work of organisation, and to be by right the highest power, the judge, the administrator of the peoples."—DR. KARL RENNER, in *Marxism, War and Internationalism*.

"The old German Social Democracy, with its 'old oft-tried' policy, has been smashed to pieces and crushed under the wheels of the triumphant chariot of Imperialism. It exists no longer. There is at present only a new German Social Democracy born in August, 1914."—FRANZ MEHRING, German Independent Social Democrat.

BOTH in Germany and Austria there is a growing movement to harmonise the aims of Pan-Germanism and Socialism. The leaders of the movement are, in Austria, Herr Dr. Karl Renner and, in Germany, Herr Dr. Paul Lensch. Both these men are prominent members of the Social Democratic Parties of their respective countries, and they already have a considerable and outspoken following. If they were merely arm-chair students and critics of Socialism, of whom there are many on the Continent—men who write voluminous treatises embodying their views on the probable development of the

Socialist movement—or if their ideas were put forward in Great Britain, where little attention is paid to social theories, their views would be of little practical importance. But neither Dr. Renner nor Dr. Lensch is of this type, and their opinions are uttered in countries where philosophic speculation on matters relating to social, political, and economic change is seriously considered by working class leaders. In Germany, especially, is this the case. Renner's *Marxism, War and Internationalism* and Lensch's *Three Years of World Revolution* cannot, therefore, be lightly dismissed as mere expressions of individual eccentricity which are unlikely to influence the movements with which the authors are associated.

PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS.

Before proceeding to examine the new doctrines which Renner and Lensch are propounding, it will be well to explain briefly how it is possible for Socialists who claim to be strict Marxists to associate the founder of "Scientific" Socialism with their new propaganda. It must be borne in mind that there is a fundamental difference between the Socialist and Labour movement of Great Britain and those of Germany and Austria. In Great Britain, the movement, broadly speaking, does not base its principles or policy on any big philosophic conception or "view of the universe." It is true

that there are sections of the movement who understand and appreciate such conceptions, and apply them as a test in deciding whether any practical or theoretical social, economic, or political proposals may be considered to be Socialist or not. But the movement, as a whole, especially since the rise of the Labour Party, has shown an essentially English disregard of philosophy. Hence we find believers in Christian ethics and theology, agnostics, philosophic materialists and unphilosophic reformers all agreeing in a general definition of the aims of Socialism without troubling to arrive at a common theoretical basis for their platform.

MATERIALISM AND SOCIALISM.

In Germany it is vastly different. Philosophic speculation is pursued in Germany with the same ardour with which theology is said to be discussed in Scotland. For instance, before the war, the Metal Workers' Union in Berlin used to hold lectures for the education of its members in the philosophies of Kant and Hegel. Prefacing the Social Democratic Party programme, there is a statement which commits the party to a theoretical exposition, based on Marx's materialist conception of history, of the inevitable progress of capitalism and its development or transformation into Socialism. Such disquisitions are of interest not only to the leaders, but also to the rank and file of the Party,

and the discussions upon them have a direct relation to the Party's policy. Proposals have been accepted or rejected in accordance with their agreement or disagreement with Marxist philosophy. This is shown in a small degree by the attitude of the Social Democratic Trade Unions towards such questions as the limitation of output and the introduction of labour-saving appliances. It is held by the Unions that to limit output, or to oppose improved methods in industry, would be to oppose the "historically necessary" economic development of society, and would, therefore, not only be reactionary but futile. The importance attached to philosophic views was most clearly shown by the tremendous discussions which arose in connection with Bernstein's attempt to modify Marx's doctrines—an event which aroused only a languid interest in British Socialist and Labour circles, with the exception of the Social Democratic Federation.

REVISION OF THEORIES

The attraction which philosophic argumentation has for the German is associated with the cultivation of a so-called "objectivity" of outlook towards the changing phenomena of economic social and political life. This, in turn, leads the German to endeavour to bring his philosophy up to date, to make it square with the changes he believes he

can discern in the course of social evolution. Sometimes, however, the opposite effect is produced. Facts are occasionally distorted when they do not fit in with the accepted theory, or dismissed as unimportant. But the general tendency is to attempt to make new facts fit in with the theory and then to draw new conclusions with regard to future developments.

REVOLUTION FORBIDDEN.

It must also be remembered, that, again, broadly speaking, while British Socialists base their ideals upon liberty and freedom for the individual, the German Socialist is more concerned with order. To use a concrete illustration, it may be said that the German idea of Socialism as compared with the British is as different as a British Garden Suburb is from the "dull monotony of right angles" and straight lines of Charlottenburg. This is the natural result of years of German education, which places the State (which Hegel defined as "the march of God through the world") in a position of authority and power over the individual undreamed of in this country. The influence of this education is difficult for a German Socialist to fight against even if he would. Its effect is seen in the words of Scheidemann at the Würzburg Congress in October last, when he declared that "the German working class can never oppose the

(German) State, and has never done so." Hence the remarkable "discipline" of the German people, of which the Social Democrats themselves boast. Heine's bitter jibe "No Revolution will take place in Germany because Revolutions are forbidden" is more true than ever. Revolution is forbidden not only by the Government, but by self-styled "revolutionary" leaders.*

CHANGING VIEWS.

In this mental atmosphere, Neo-Marxism was born. Its beginning will be found in theoretical debates and differences that arose some years before the war. Men such as Richard Calwer, Max Schippel, and Georg Bernhard† were the forerunners of Renner and Lensch. They endeavoured to bring the Party to accept the view that the Imperialist Protectionist policy of Germany should not be opposed, but rather supported, by the Social Democrats on practical as well as philosophic grounds. They urged with considerable plausibility that protection and the fostering thereby of great industrial combinations had benefited the workers by increasing opportunities for employment and raising wages. As it

* The remarkable submissiveness of the German workers to order and discipline is shown by the almost entire absence of Syndicalist tendencies in the Trade Union movement.

† The well-known German journalist and editor of *Plutus*.

could not be proved from actual experience that German industry and agriculture would have been equally or more prosperous under Free Trade, they appeared to have a good case. They, moreover, contended that the economic policy of the German Government was in the line of "necessary historical" development, as it promoted the growth of capitalism towards its culminating point. But Calwer, Schippel and Bernhard were unable to obtain sufficient support for the new policy they advocated, and they had to leave the Party. Their successors, however, are still members, and are likely to remain so, as circumstances have made the situation more favourable for the reception of their doctrines.

THE MARXIAN DOCTRINE.

According to the theory of the development of society as expounded by Marx and adopted by the German Social Democratic Party, the concentration of capital into ever larger units possessed by an ever-diminishing number of capitalists is an inevitable process. The big capitalist is bound to crush out the smaller, and drive the latter into the great army of the proletariat whose position grows more and more insecure and unbearable. As the result, the proletariat will, at the right historical moment, rise up in revolt, "expropriate the expropriators," and take control of the whole

economic and political machinery of society. The task of the Socialist movement is to organise and prepare the proletariat in every country for this "great day"—the day that Lenin and Trotsky fondly imagined that they had brought about in Russia.

REVISIONISM.

The Marxian theory thus baldly stated has been subjected to strong criticism from the Revisionist school of the German Socialists as represented by Bernstein, who contend that the catastrophic change from capitalism to Socialism as visualised by Marx is not likely to arise, principally because the concentration of capital does not diminish but increases the number of capitalists, and that the proletariat in the great capitalist countries is not suffering from "increasing misery." It is maintained by the Revisionists that the workers in those countries have improved their economic and political position, and can, if they so desire, transform society into a Socialist commonwealth step by step, and that this evolutionary method is more in accordance with modern development than the melodramatic prophecies of Marx. As a necessary corollary of this criticism, it was urged that the Social Democratic Party should drop all pretence of being a Revolutionary body, and definitely announce itself as a democratic reform party

working on constitutional lines—a change which, it was alleged, would be simply the harmonising of its programme with its practice, as it had ceased to act as if it believed in the possibility of a rapid overturn of the existing order.

The Revisionists failed to convince the Party that it ought to modify its theoretical basis and bring it into line with its policy. But they remained within the Party fold, and their influence has grown so much during the last ten years that many leaders who still pay lip service to orthodox Marxism privately refer to the Party programme as being merely “an historical document.” And the effect of Revisionism has shown itself in the greater concentration of the Party leaders upon matters of social reform which were formerly looked upon as mere “palliatives,” having no relation to Socialism, and upon the building up of Trades Unions, which indicate that it is possible to improve the economic position of the proletariat without first overturning society and establishing a Socialist régime. This naturally led to a less bitter feeling between the Socialists and the upholders of the present system, a fact constantly deplored by the more rigid followers of Marx.

THE NEW MARXISM.

The infallibility of Marx thus questioned by the Revisionists was attacked from another direction

by the forerunners of the New Marxism of to-day. The development of capitalism in Germany was subjected to a further analysis which disclosed a new factor not foreseen by the famous author of *Das Kapital*. He had not anticipated the part which a modern State might play in the sphere of economics. He gives his reader the impression that the great drama of conflict between capital and labour would be played out with the State acting as a third party under the control of whichever of the two combatants was at the time in the ascendant. But in Germany the State declined to play the secondary role of "night-watchman." It assumed a leading part and became the organiser and controller in the economic as well as in the political sphere. An economic statecraft was invented, having for its object the building up of German trade, commerce, and industry in the way best suited to promote the power and prestige of the German nation as a predominantly militarist Power with world-wide ambitions. To do this successfully it was necessary not only to encourage, control, and direct the energies of the capitalist and give him a national aim, but also to grant some measure of protection to the workman. This was also imperative for military reasons. As the army remained the first care of the State, it was essential that its potential cannon-fodder should not be allowed to suffer from the effects

of unrestricted individualistic capitalism. Hence arose swiftly the combined system of State-promoted capitalist enterprise and social legislation, which, together, has been called State Socialism, but which should more correctly be termed State Capitalism. It is true that when carefully examined, the Old Age Pension, Sick and Invalid Insurance, and other similar laws of Germany are far less satisfactory from a working-class point of view than those of Great Britain; nevertheless, they are eminently suited to the methodical, thrifty temperament of the German masses, who consider them to be of such great value that they have clamoured for a scheme of State Unemployment Insurance of a similar kind. It may be noted that the British Unemployment Insurance Act, framed on more generous lines than those proposed in Germany, was accepted by British Trade Unionists with reluctance, and its extension to trades not now within it has met with strong and successful opposition.

EFFECT OF SOCIAL REFORM.

This granting by the State of small instalments of social reform has also tended to take the edge off the weapons of the Socialists against the capitalist, and make the workers more reconciled to the existing order, and more ready to receive

a new interpretation of Marxist doctrines.* This is especially the case with German Trade Unionists, among whom Schippel and Calwer were given a platform, although they were banned from the Social Democratic Party itself. The rank and file of the Trade Unions would appreciate the contention that an Imperial-Protectionist policy, although it had raised the cost of living and increased the burden of taxation, had, nevertheless, improved wages and extended employment in certain important industries.

REALPOLITIK.

The remarkable strides made by the Social Democratic Trade Unions (although suffering from severe legal restrictions), during the ten years preceding the war, as shown by their membership, Press, and palatial *Gewerkschaftshäuser*, was used as evidence of the value to the working classes of Germany's economic policy and methods of organisation. It was also argued that the Imperialist naval programme was not inimical to the workers, as it provided employment for thousands of skilled men in countless occupations. The workers, it was declared, were vitally interested in the maintenance of these and all other industries

* Bebel was aware of this tendency, and warned his party at their annual conferences against the decline of revolutionary sentiment due to the improved conditions of life enjoyed by trade unionists, especially by their leaders.

for which a big supply of raw material must be ensured. It was, therefore, necessary for Germany to have colonies from which these supplies could be drawn, a contention which found support among the Social Democratic leaders, notably Herr Edward David, the Revisionist Socialist member for Mainz. This support of the extension and development of German colonies of necessity implied that the workers should not reject the territorial ambitions of Germany's ruling caste. The advocacy of a full-flavoured *Realpolitik* was held to be based upon a right understanding of the materialist conception of history upon which the working-class movement, both Trade Union and Socialist, took its stand.*

The part played by the State in Germany in promoting and controlling trade, commerce, and industry is now too well known to require detailed exposition. The State ownership of railways which is used to develop home industries and foreign trade by means of special rates and facilities, the State recognition of Chambers of Commerce, and

* The defeat of the Independent Socialist candidate by the Majority Socialist at Niederbarnim, in March, 1918, is described by *Die Glocke* as a triumph for the "policy of the General Committee of Trade Unions." The successful candidate—a workman—in his election address declared: "In this State we live, we cannot turn our backs upon it *Realpolitik* or a policy of illusion, that is the choice before you." The illusions referred to are the idea of Internationalism and the old revolutionary policy.

the granting of titles and decorations to their members, the encouragement of the creation of "Kartels," are all instances of a carefully worked-out policy of identifying the State with the economic growth of the nation.

SOCIALISTS AND JUNKERS.

When the Kaiser began his war upon Europe, it was evident that the old revolutionary teachings associated with the names of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht had practically ceased to have any influence over the Social Democrats and Trade Unionists, and that the propaganda for Socialist support of Pan-German aims had largely converted the leaders of the two organisations. Although for years the Social Democrats had maintained that the word of the Kaiser and the Junker caste could not be trusted, and although, just before the outbreak of the conflict, they had declared that Austria was determined on war, they accepted without question the statement of the Kaiser that Russia was attacking Germany and rallied the working classes to the support of the Junkers. In the early stages of the war this patriotic, anti-international attitude, which was in complete contradiction to the pre-war declarations of the Party, was defended on the ground that the war was undertaken for the protection of the Fatherland against foreign aggression. But voices soon made them-

selves heard protesting that the Socialists in reality were at one with the Pan-Germans in holding that the struggle was entered into in order to fulfil Germany's "historical mission" to become the dominant Power in the world, and they found a favourable audience among those who had listened to the ideas of Calwer, Schippel, and their disciples. Moreover, this explanation of the Socialist attitude was more intellectually honest than the palpably false plea that the Socialists were actuated only with the desire to defend their country. German military successes also tended to win over the "objective" mind of the German Socialist to the view that Socialism and Pan-German aims were not altogether at variance.

THE SUPER-STATE.

Dr. Lensch and Dr. Renner have little difficulty in demonstrating that the Neo-Marxist creed is logically derived from the older Marxist theory. If it is admitted that the law of the concentration of capital and the crushing out of the smaller capitalist is true, then it follows that when a State arises which has evolved and organised a super-capitalism it will inevitably seek to dominate or absorb States less highly developed. But in the economic conflict between State and State, the military factor, absent in the struggle between the greater and smaller capitalist within each

State, comes into play. Germany, foreseeing this, armed herself on a gigantic scale, in order to ensure victory when the moment came for her to assert herself against the "backward" type of community, represented by "individualistic" England, and to play her destined role of the dominating capitalist State. Lensch points out that :—

This fight for the world market and the money market was conducted more and more with the organised power of the State. German diplomacy was every moment at the service of German finance, and this help was all the more effective the more powerful the position of the State which stood behind German diplomacy. A strong navy and a ready army in the background were a precious support in the fight for the world market and for the division of the still "unowned" remains of the earth's surface.

Nothing is more touching than the soft assurances of German politicians and professors about German peacefulness. Of course! Of Germany's subjective peacefulness there is no doubt. But that ought not to prevent us from recognising that, regarded objectively, we are and must be disturbers of the peace.*

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE.

There is much German virtue in the words "subjective" and "objective." "Subjectively," the German Social Democrats were against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, but now that it is an "accomplished fact" and may be regarded "objectively," the robbery must be considered as justified

* *Three Years of World Revolution.*

by historical necessity. In other words, the German Socialists are at one with the Pan-Germans in refusing to consider the question of returning the two provinces, not because of any rightful historical claim to them that can be advanced by Germany, but because she requires for her industries the raw materials which the provinces furnish. It will be exactly the same with the later robberies perpetrated at Brest-Litovsk. "Subjectively," the Social Democrats have protested against the treaty, but unless Germany is compelled by force to disgorge, they will "objectively," and, perhaps, with words of regret, calculated to deceive the Socialists of other countries, acquiesce in the results of Germany's ruthless spoliation of Russia.

NEO-MARXISM IN ACTION.

The "subjective" attitude of the Party towards Neo-Marxism was displayed at the annual Congress at Würzburg in October, 1917, when it was declared that the ideas of Dr. Lensch were not endorsed by the Socialist leaders. The *Vorwärts* also stated that, if Dr. Lensch's views were realised, "it would be the end of all that Social Democracy has ever striven for, a total rupture with all our traditions and ideas up to now." The "objective" attitude is shown in the expulsion of Karl Kautsky, the old *Theoretiker* of the Party, and an opponent of

Dr. Lensch, from the editorship of the official academic organ, *Die Neue Zeit*, in which policy is formulated and discussed, and the installing in his place of Herr Heinrich Cunow, who has expressed sympathy with the views of Dr. Lensch. It is also shown in the retention of Dr. Lensch within the Party. This is quite in keeping with the double game which the German Social Democrats have learned to play with a skill almost equal to that of their rulers.* Herr David, at the same Congress, clumsily disclosed this method in his declaration that "The German armies must continue to fight vigorously, whilst the German Socialists encourage and stimulate pacifism among Germany's enemies." And Dr. Lensch points out that the Reichstag's "no annexations and no indemnities" resolution, upon which the Social Democrats plume themselves, could be adopted by the Pan-Germans because "Germany **will** have won the war if she does not lose it, but England will have lost the war if she does not win it." First bring about a peace by understanding which secures Germany's political independence, territorial integrity and economic freedom, and then Germany will have shown her-

* The latest instance of this double game is the "demonstration" vote of the Socialist Party in the Reichstag, July, 1918, against the Budget, followed soon after by their vote in favour of the war credit.

self so strong "that all these things shall be added unto her": "all these things" being the full Pan-German programme.* As to the rupturing of Party traditions, this has occurred again and again, the latest instance being the reception by Herr Scheidemann of the position of vice-president of the Reichstag, which entails making personal obeisance to the Kaiser, an act which, before the war, was declared to be impossible on the part of a Social Democrat. Again, "subjectively," the Party announces to its Socialist comrades in other countries that it is pacifist, but it does not follow the British Labour and Socialist movement in demanding the abolition of conscription after the war.† On the contrary, the Würzburg Conference expressed itself in favour of the continuation of compulsory military service, merely stipulating that the army should become "national"—whatever that may mean. It is certain, however, that under any name the future armed forces of Germany would not be an ill-equipped, ineffective

* *Die Glocke*.

† The Independent Labour Party has taken up a more extreme attitude against "militarism": it has declared that Socialists should not take part in any war, even one for the defence of their country. This opens up the interesting possibility that at a Socialist Peace Conference British delegates would present terms which they would declare they would not fight for under any circumstances, while the German representatives could back up their demands with the threat of their "national" army.

militia, but an efficient military instrument suitable for carrying out the plans of the Pan-Germans and their Socialist allies.

The attitude of the Social Democrats towards national aspirations other than their own fits in with the Neo-Marxist tenets. The Party which formerly prided itself upon its Internationalism is now equally proud of its intense national spirit. But neither now nor before the war has it shown sympathy with the national feelings of the Poles suffering under Prussian tyranny; nor has the German section of the Austrian Socialists ever given recognition to the claims of the subject races of Austria and Hungary, whose Socialist representatives have again and again denounced the imperialistic dominating tendencies of their German colleagues. National feeling, always excepting that of the German Socialists, was described as bourgeois sentimentality.* Poles and Czechs

* When the German Socialist deputies visited Brussels in September, 1914, to remonstrate with the Belgian Socialists for offering resistance to the invaders, the Belgians naturally complained of the violation of Belgian neutrality. Dr. Koster, editor of the *Hamburger Echo* (a Socialist newspaper), replied: "It is your fault. You ought to have let us pass; you would have been handsomely compensated by our Government. . . . Moreover, everybody has known for years past that, in the event of a war between France and Germany, our troops would pass through Belgium." The Belgians asked whether no weight should be given to national honour, international treaties, and the rights of free peoples. "National honour!" replied Dr. Koster. "That is mere middle-class idealism, with which Socialists have nothing to do.

were told that they should organise against capitalism, and not waste their time attacking the Governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary.* The old Marxist battle-cry, "Proletariat of all countries unite," was used (always excepting in Germany) for the purpose of belittling the idea of national sentiment which, it was contended, served to separate the masses of the various countries from one another. By weakening the spirit of nationalism abroad, while it is fostered at home, the task of securing German domination is made easier.

The German Social Democrats will, no doubt, try to convince their fellow Socialists in other lands that they are in complete disagreement with Lensch and Renner. But German Socialist policy during the

As for international treaties, they do not hold in case of war. Does not historical materialism teach us that the development of the proletariat is intimately bound up with the economic prosperity of the nation? It follows that the German Socialists ought to support the Government." The Belgians answered that, for them, honour ranked above material interests, and that they adopted the motto of the old free towns of Flanders: "Better to die of one's own free will than to lose one's country's freedom." Dr. Koster found this assertion so extraordinary that he called his colleagues to hear it repeated, whereupon one of the Belgians said bitterly that the only thing they seemed to possess in common was a stomach; but on the Belgian side there was a heart as well, which seemed to be replaced on the German side by a point of interrogation.

* The Pan-German attitude of the German Socialists of Austria and their policy towards the Czecho-Slav and Polish Socialist sections is described by Vladimir Nosek in *Austrian Socialism in the Present War*.

war justifies the view that these two prominent Socialists are only expounding in theory what the Party has actually carried out in practice, exactly as Bernstein rightly claimed that his Revisionist campaign was simply an attempt to make the Social Democratic philosophy square with its proceedings. By giving whole-hearted support to the war policy of the Government, and making peace without terms with the Kaiser, the great majority of the German Social Democrats voluntarily joined forces with those who, they had declared, were not only the enemies of the German working-class, but a menace to the whole world. Neo-Marxism is an intellectual defence of this action which may be now "subjectively" repudiated by the German Social Democratic leaders, but will be "objectively" accepted by them if Pan-German ambitions in the war are realised.

Franz Mehring is right in declaring that the old German Social Democracy is dead. The great movement built up by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht with the object of capturing and transforming the German Militarist State has become the willing captive of the power that it set out to conquer. The wheel has come full circle: the revolutionaries have been revolutionised into apostles of the gospel of Junkerdom.