

EDITORIAL

A PEEP AT THE FRENCH CHAMBER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

GUSTAVE Herve, so emphatically a man of action that at one time French Anarchists claimed him as their own, and claimed him so emphatically that he found it necessary publicly to disown the crew—Gustave Herve has a signed article entitled “The New Bloc and the Socialists,” “bloc” being the continental parliamentary term for the coalition of several party groups in the manoeuvres and battles delivered on the floor of the parliaments. The article appears in *La Guerre Sociale* for the week of June 4–10. Its leading passages are these:

“It was to be expected that the idea of a new bloc—a bloc free from all program-confusion and without ministerial participation—should provoke no enthusiasm from certain quarters of the Socialist party.

“But, truly, there are objections that are unexpected.

“The only bloc we are after, we are answered, is the bloc of the Socialist party and the C.G.T. [“Confederation General du Travail,” General Confederation of Labor.] That is quite sufficient to arrest the wave of nationalism.

“As to that bloc—why, we have it now. We have incessantly preached it these many years. Hence the conditions are coming about which to reach we have these two years been advocating, to wit, the ‘disarmament of hatred.’ But one must be blind not to see that it will not be with that bloc only that we shall succeed in arresting the wave.

“Tho’ the ‘disarmament of hatred,’ of mistrust and of vanity between the two staff-offices, the Socialist and the Syndicalist—is an excellent matter, both for the Party and the C.G.T., the same does not, in point of fact, add, parliamentarily, a single vote to the Socialist party. And for a very good reason: all the Syndicalists, with infinitesimal exceptions, have long been Socialist voters. The from 500,000 to 600,000 members of the C.G.T. are, almost to a man, comprised in the million voters who support the Party at the hustings. Now, then, these our million voters, what are they but a twelfth of the electoral body, and, altogether, our million has 69 representatives in Parliament out of 600. It surely is not with 69 deputies that we can hope to prevent the passage of the three-years law [military service.]

“What certain Socialist quarters obstinately refuse to see is the fact that, their defects notwithstanding, and notwithstanding their faults, radicals have behind them, at present, besides a portion of the bourgeoisie and of the urban working class, almost all the republican peasants.

“That some day or other this peasant democracy will come over to Socialism is to be hoped. But no illusions must be indulged. Our penetration into the rural districts is slow, The Party’s fine posture upon the military question will cause it to gain ground among the rural population. But hereafter, as before the elections of 1914, the radicals will continue to marshal behind them more voters than the Socialist party. It is childish to expect otherwise.

“Consequently, if we wish to arrest the wave of nationalism, prevent the three years, the thirty months, and, perhaps, war itself, the real object held in view by the present nationalist moves, we must lean upon the elected candidates of the non-Socialist democracy.

“But, the objection is raised, whom are you to ally yourself with?

“Where are the Radicals? we are asked. And we are told there is but one reactionary bourgeoisie. There are no longer any Radicals.

“Pray, put on your spectacles.

“The bloc of 242 deputies who for several weeks have doggedly voted against the three-years ministry—are they nothing?

“The Radicals who, more than a hundred strong, gathered at Berne,—do they, excepting M. Henry Berenger, who was at Berne no one knows why,—do those Radicals look to you like the nationalists who call them Prussians.

“Yes, indeed! This is not the case of ‘all prizes.’ What party is that which has only ‘virtue prizes’?

“There are in the bunch such as Masse and Dumont, ready to sell themselves for a [ministerial] portfolio.

“We know full well that, so soon as the bloc of the Left should be as able as the bloc of the Right to secure portfolios for the Radicals of ministerial timber, schemers and place-hunters, we will see the queer kind of fidelity to principle that the gentleman will display. Sad, but true. Let us imitate the capitalist class: it uses the ambitions. Let us also be wise enough to use them likewise, provided they be not out-and-out scamps. . . .

“To sum up:

“There are, in fact, two bourgeoisies, however laughable this may sound.

“The one of the Right, which is nationalist, clerical, conservative and reactionary.

“The one of the Left, which has the peasant democracy in tow, and which is of international, pacific, reform and republican tendencies.

“The premature rupture of the old bloc has had for its consequence to throw the bourgeoisie of the Left—at least a portion thereof—into the bloc of the bourgeoisie of the Right, and thereby to make a prisoner of the latter.

“The bourgeoisie of the Right is at present endeavoring to disengage it-

self of the toils, the dangers of which it is alive to.

“Ours the task to give it a helping hand.

“It is for our Socialist party—because of its being better organized, because it knows what it wants, and because it is the most profoundly republican, to adopt the policy of assisting the Radicals, in recovering their full forces in Parliament and organize themselves into a veritable party, instead of suffering them to sink up to their necks.

“But I am certain, as certain as can be, seeing that neither the Socialist party nor the C.G.T. is as yet in condition to rush upon the insurrectionary path, that the only policy, available at present, to preserve the lay Republic, and with her the social Republic which the former carries in her womb, from falling into the threatening clutches of Caesarism.”

Vastly clearer than the “Peep into the Douma” of the monstrosity of the Russian social system, treated before in these columns; clearer even than the “Peep into the Reichstag,” treated subsequently, does the peep into the French Chamber of Deputies reveal the opportunities that the parliamentary battle offers to the Revolution, its peculiar dangers, and, by inference, the necessity of the outside, the economic organization, for the revolutionary act. The peep into the French Chamber furthermore illustrates the transitivity of the parliamentary, hence, of Political Government.

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