

EDITORIAL

THE BELGIAN EXCUSES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Of deep interest is the Brussels correspondence, published in our last Saturday's issue, from Lucien Sanial, the chairman of the Socialist Labor Party delegation to the late International Congress held in Paris. The explanations, or excuses, that he says are advanced by the leading men among the Belgian delegation for the support that they gave to the so-called "Kautsky Resolution"—a resolution that, abandoning the principle of the class struggle, approves the acceptance of political jobs at the hands of capitalist governments—may eventually be serviceable to understand the course of events in Europe, possibly also to foresee them.

The explanations or excuses amount to this:

"The Socialist movement in Belgium is making rapid progress; already its voting strength runs up into the hundreds of thousands; but its progress is hampered, so seriously hampered, that it may be held back, tied hand and foot. What hampers it is the 'plural' system of voting. By this system the majority that the working class could wield is held down to a minority: the property-holding minority boosting itself into a majority by the multiplication of votes in one hand. This cannot be changed without the 'plural' system of voting is first abolished. To abolish it, the Cabinet must be taken from the Clericals and the upper plutocratic parties. This end can be accomplished only by an alliance with the middle class. Therefore it was imperative to vote against the Guesde Resolution, the effect of which, however unquestionably sound otherwise, would be to interdict alliances with the bourgeoisie, and it became imperative to support the Kautsky Resolution, the effect of which was to approve of such alliances."

Whatever this reasoning may be, it is the reverse of statesmanship, above all on the lips of a Belgian representative of a revolutionary movement, the working class, the Socialist movement.

Surely the abolition of the "plural" system of voting is not the ultimate aim with Belgian Socialists; it is only a means to an end. The end, the ultimate aim, with

them, is the overthrow of the existing monarchic form and capitalist system of government in Belgium, and its successful substitution with the Socialist Republic. In short, the aim is the Social Revolution in Belgium. No act, that, while promoting this end with one hand, simultaneously thrusts a spoke into its wheel with the other, is an act of statesmanship. Such a suicidal policy is the policy that guided the Belgian delegation in Paris.

The small territory of Belgium borders on two powerful neighbors,—Germany and France. Either, in capitalist hands, could and certainly would at any moment put an extinguisher to a revolution in Belgium that would threaten their ruling class. The backward political state of Germany, even more backward than that of Belgium, renders the German Government inaccessible to changes that would eliminate the Empire from the list of enemies. Not so with France. There the advanced political development renders the French Government accessible to influences that might at the very least palsy the Republic's hand in an attempted hostile stroke. The cue of the Belgian Socialist statesman is to aid with all his might the preservation of the purity and revolutionary spirit of the Socialist Movement in France: to resist with every effort within him, and all the forces he can set in play, every step that, by the abandonment of principle, opens the doors to the demoralization of the Socialist forces, and strengthens the arm of the capitalist class in the chicane policy of emasculating, through corruption, the uprising of the class-conscious working class and its onward march to victory. The vote of the Belgian delegation for the inglorious Kautsky Resolution failed in this. By withholding its uncompromising condemnation of Millerand's acceptance of a portfolio in the French Cabinet; by, thereby, at least seeming to wink at Millerand's infamous conduct in the Cabinet; above all, by denying the principle of the class struggle through a theoretic and quibbling approval of the acceptance of political jobs at the hands of capitalist governments;—by this act the Belgian delegation played directly into the hands of the political policy of capitalist France, and thus strengthened the arm of this neighboring enemy against themselves and their movement at home.

Whichever way the conduct of those is viewed who stood by the Kautsky Resolution, it leaves them in unenviable light. Like the Furies that of old pursued the evil doers, this resolution will ever return to plague its sponsors. As time recedes, the delegations of America, France and Ireland, together with the other few scattering votes that stood out firm against the Resolution, will shine with

increasing brilliancy, and point the path that those who slipped may return to.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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