

SPECIAL FROM GERMANY

FOSTER VIEWS MILITARY DISPLAY OF IGNORANCE—GERMAN SOCIAL- ISTS BELIEVE IN STRONG ARMY —A FEW TIPS FOR AMERI- CAN PARLIAMEN- TARIANS.

Today I witnessed the annual review by the kaiser of the troops stationed in Berlin. It took place at Tempelhof Feld—an immense military drill ground on the outskirts of Berlin—and was a remarkable sight. Possibly 30,000 men took part in it.

I arrived on the scene about 7 a. m. and already the troops in their gorgeous uniforms were drawn up in two dense lines about a mile long. Der kaiser arrived shortly after and as he and a big bunch of princes and royal petticoats, etc., came on the field, the long line of soldiers like one man came to a present arms, about forty bands played—the most infernal clangor I ever heard as they were either all playing different airs or were out of time—and all hands gave a bunch of "hochs." Willy rode along and looked the slaves over and later had them march by him. This marching by the kaiser is a ceremony worth going a long way to see. It shows what damned lools working men can make of themselves. Each regiment as it approached the kaiser's stand fell into a peculiar step, the men lifting their legs—stiff kneed—at least three feet from the ground. They kept this up until out of the sacred presence. Just what part this monkey step performs in making "good" soldiers is rather difficult to discover. I figured that a man who would keep that step up for 500 yards would be a case for the hospital.

After about three hours of this barbaric pageant the affair came to a close and I went home and continued my reading of August Bebel's book entitled "Not Standing Army but Militia" (Volksheer). Bebel is one of the most radical of the Socialist "anti-militarists" and one is inspired by his revolutionary criticisms of the army. He even goes so far as to say that the uniforms of officers and men should be made of more sombre colored materials; that the polished leather trappings, burnished steel helmets and breastplates should be abolished; that the wearing of medals and orders be forbidden. The revolutionary significance of these propositions is beyond computation, as anyone who has seen the German army on a field day will admit.

Bebel furthers these capitalism destroying reforms by stating in italics that their institution would afford an immense relief for the officers who would be freed from many of their very unpleasant duties.

Bebel being a socialist naturally is patriotic; he is in favor of the very strongest army possible, in order that the workers may be able to defend their country—the old statement that the workers have no country has long been stuck in the socialist attic. He complains bitterly that the efficacy of the German army is greatly impaired by the workers' lack of military training between the ages of 14—age of leaving school—and 20—age of joining army. He says on this point: "The military education of the youth must be thus (drilling, turning, etc.) continued until its 20th year, on Sundays, holidays, free afternoons, or the long summer evenings." Our unthinking American socialists should take a tip from Bebel's hint of how to utilize their spare time, and when they have "done" their 12 hours in the steel mills they can put in the rest of the day in organizing companies of boy scouts, etc., in order that our country may be defended from the threatened attack by the Eskimos.

Bebel favors the Swiss army very strongly, though he says it is by no means perfect. In the Swiss army all citizens between 17 and 50 are soldiers. To make the Swiss army "perfect" from a socialist standpoint it will probably be necessary to extend the service limits to "from the cradle to the grave."

The American socialist movement being young is somewhat unsophisticated. It isn't wise to itself yet and is floundering around in the most absurdly contradictory doctrines and tactics. One of these contradictions is its stand towards the military question. In one issue of the International Socialist Review we see pictures of Eugene Debs delivering a lecture from a platform "smothered with American flags," and in the next a glorification of Gustav Herve, who is one of the "rankest" anti-militarists in Europe.

The socialist movement must get right—it must either cut out Herve and anti-militarism or cut out the American flag. The example of its older and wiser sister party of Germany will indicate the proper factor to eliminate. It has cut out anti-militarism—as expressed by Herve—and the syndicalists with a vengeance. To be helpful, I might suggest that some one translate Bebel's book (above quoted), which is a sort of bible of socialist "anti-militarism," and also that the rude "La Patrie" of Herve be laid on the shelf. The continued circulation of this latter unfortunate work can only result in hurting the feelings of the kaiser hayseeds and "our" vote will suffer in consequence. The substitution of Bebel's work on the other hand would prove conclusively that the best socialists are the best patriots.

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