

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 250.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 1904.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

THE NEWS FROM RUSSIA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

CONSUMERS of the commodity “news,” retailed by the private factories known as “newspapers,” will have to be wide-awake, or they stand a good chance of one of these days being greatly surprised at the tidings they will read from Russia. When the war first broke out, these papers ran over with despatches telling of “the wave of patriotism that was rising high all over Russia” and at “the unbounded manifestations of confidence for the Czar,”—these despatches were false. Presently, and that is the stage of “shoddy” news the public is in, the truth regarding what is actually going on in Russia forced itself upon the despatches to the extent that the existence of opposition to the government is somewhat admitted. These reformed despatches now announce that the Russian government “has forbidden demonstrations of patriotism because they were apt to lead to counter demonstrations.” Both premises and conclusions are naive. No sane man will deny that there are elements, and not slight ones, in Russia who either out of selfish or other motives are fired with a sincere desire to see their country mop the soil of Manchuria and Corea with the Japs; nor will anyone be silly enough to claim that the Russian government is above the methods regularly adopted by the British government whenever it considers desirable to have “popular demonstrations of enthusiasm” in Ireland for the British crown. That there are in Russia demonstrations truly meant as “patriotic,” or that such can be had goes without saying. The question is, however, whether many of the demonstrations that are announcing themselves as patriotic in Russia, are not setting up the claim as a foil, as a mask; whether their real purpose is not just the reverse of what the Russian government would consider patriotic; and whether the government sees through the mask, and so seeing is stopping them? That is the rub.

Revolutions, on the point of breaking out, often have most hypocritic ways

about them. Going no further away for an illustration than our own South American sister republics, the revolution that threw off the yoke of Spain was inaugurated under a most patriotic disguise. Napoleon had entered Spain, overthrown and imprisoned the King, Ferdinand VII, and set his own brother Joseph Bonaparte on the throne of Ferdinand and Isabella. The revolutionary movement in South America, which had been agitating, educating and organizing against Spain upon straight-out lines for twenty years, that was ripe enough to break out at any moment, and that simply awaited a “pretext,” now saw its opportunity. Their “beloved King Ferdinand had been outraged!” Could any more patriotic sentiment be conceived? “Ferdinand VII! Down with Joseph Bonaparte!”—thus ran the rallying cry from the mouths of the Orinoco to the snow-capped peaks of the Andes. Could any more patriotic device be framed? But usurpers and their satraps have keen noses. The Spanish governors, captains-general and other officials did not like these “patriotic demonstrations,” and did all they could to stop them. The Spanish officials were denounced by the “patriots” as “Bonapartians,” and to the orchestration of “Ferdinand VII! Down with Joseph Bonaparte!” the real Spanish patriots and representatives of Spanish rule were bundled off, while the keener ones, who saw through the pretext, and were witless enough to say so and to act accordingly, were strung up to the nearest tamarind trees by the “patriotic demonstrators.” Soon after, the mask was dropped, and when Ferdinand VII was restored to his throne, the soldiers he sent down to South America were no longer greeted with cries of “Ferdinand VII!” but with the cry of “Down with Spain!” and were rolled into the sea. May not the “patriotic demonstrations” that are now occupying the Russian government be of similar kind? More than one fact accessible to this office points to the conclusion; the circumstance, moreover, that the Russian government—mind, the knout government of Russia—is naively said to be stopping demonstrations favorable to itself because of the unfavorable ones that the former promote, instead of its merely stamping out the latter in its habitual and drastic style,—that circumstance confirms the theory that the Russian “patriotic demonstrations” are probably of the same feather as the South American ones in favor of Ferdinand VII. In which case the credulous consumers of the private capitalist out-put of “news” have a surprise in store for them.

Revolutions, bona fide ones, agitate, educate and organize upon clean-cut lines and are straight forward—up to the moment of breaking out. At that moment, and for a moment, they frequently become paragons of hypocrisy. It is a curious fact, and yet true.

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

Uploaded April 2007

slpns@igc.org